

SOJOURNERS AND SETTLERS

HISTORIES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA
AND THE CHINESE

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO



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SOJOURNERS AND SETTLERS

Sojourners and Settlers Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese

**Edited by Anthony Reid
with the assistance of Kristine Alilunas Rodgers**



**UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I PRESS
Honolulu**

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University of Hawai'i Press edition published in 2001

First published in Australia by Allen & Unwin, 1996

Printed in the United States of America

06 05 04 03 02 01

6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Sojourners and settlers: histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese / edited by Anthony Reid, with the assistance of Kristine Alilunas Rodgers
p. cm.

Originally published: St Leonards, NSW : Allen & Unwin, 1996.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8248-2446-6 (alk. paper)

1. Chinese—Asia, Southeastern—History. 2. China—Relations—Asia, Southeastern. 3. Asia, Southeastern—Relations—China. I. Title: Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese. II. Reid, Anthony. III. Alilunas-Rodgers, Kristine.

DS523.4.C45 S64 2001

959'.004951—dc21

2001017124

University of Hawai'i Press books are printed on acid-free paper and meet the guidelines for permanence and durability of the Council on Library Resources.

Designed by Carol Colbath

Printed by Versa Press

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Preface

China's relations with Southeast Asia, and the historical role of the Southeast Asian Chinese, have been among the most understudied aspects of a generally understudied sub-discipline. The reasons have to do not only with the difficulty of source material but also with a persistent ethnocentrism in writing about the region in European languages, which has seen European influence as in some sense the successor to an older civilizing impulse from India, and the Chinese role as an awkward sideshow. A more profound and enduring problem is whether it is possible or desirable to define who is and is not "Chinese" in a world now dominated by nation states.

Those who work in this difficult field are few. A number of them were galvanized as well as saddened by the loss of one of their number, Dr Jennifer Cushman, who died in Canberra at a tragically young age in 1989. This loss provided the initial impetus for the specialists represented here to pool their efforts, first in a series of lectures and then in this book. We hope it represents the major step forward for which Jennifer was also striving towards understanding the long and complex interaction between China and Southeast Asia.

Kristine Alilunas Rodgers shouldered the burden of copy-editing the varied chapters of the book to a consistent format and preparing the graphic material. Jude Shanahan and Julie Gordon typed out most of the edited manuscripts in their final format. Kay Dancey drew the three maps and Patrick Jory prepared the index. Linda Poskitt and Yiqi Wu were helpful in a variety of ways. To all of these we are most grateful.

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Map 1. Southeast Asia

Abbreviations

AIIA	Australian Institute of International Affairs
ARA	Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague
ASAA	Asian Studies Association of Australia
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BEFEO	<i>Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient</i>
CSSH	<i>Comparative Studies in Society and History</i>
EFEO	École Française d'Extrême-Orient
ISEAS	Institute of Southeast Asian Studies
HRAF	Human Relations Area Files
JAS	<i>Journal of Asian Studies</i>
JMBRAS	<i>Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
JSBRAS	<i>Journal of the Straits Branch, Royal Asiatic Society</i>
JSEAH	<i>Journal of Southeast Asian History</i>
JSEAS	<i>Journal of Southeast Asian Studies</i>
JSS	<i>Journal of the Siam Society</i>
JSSS	<i>Journal of the South Seas Society</i>
KITLV	Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal, Land- en Volkenkunde
MAS	<i>Modern Asian Studies</i>
OUP	Oxford University Press
RIIA	Royal Institute of International Affairs
TT	<i>Dai Viet su ky toan thuc</i> (Complete Book of the Historical Records of Great Viet)
VOC	Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie

Introduction¹

Jamie Mackie

The rapid economic growth of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the six ASEAN states over the last thirty years has drawn attention to the prominent part played in that process by the twenty million or so “Overseas Chinese” living in Southeast Asia. This remarkable group of “prodigious savers and investors” is sometimes seen as a classic case of the “marginal trading minority” of which other cases are the Jews in Europe, Indians in East Africa, and the diasporas of Lebanese, Armenians, Parsees, and others.² The Southeast Asian Chinese are currently the largest and most successful such minority, and their role in the development of capitalism in this part of Asia has been crucially important.

Their success has stimulated much writing, both scholarly and ephemeral, about them in recent years, seeking to unveil the secrets of their commercial success. There have been both ambitious models of “Chinese capitalism” and narrower studies of commercial and kinship networks, trust (*xinyong*) and family firms.³ Yet very little of that writing has had

¹ This introduction was a collective effort in many ways, in which all the contributors to the volume had a part. I particularly acknowledge the contributions of Anthony Reid and Craig Reynolds, who suggested substantial changes to the various drafts through which it went, and Kris Rodgers and Anthony Reid, who tidied up the text, footnotes and table.

² Numbers and quotations from *The Economist*, 18 July 1992, p. 21, which estimates that there are fifty-five million overseas Chinese in various parts of the world, including twenty-one million in Taiwan and six million in Hong Kong. Some of the figures may err on the high side; see Table 1 below and the note on the accuracy of all such estimates. On the problematical term “Overseas Chinese”, see Wang Gungwu, *Community and Nation: Essays on Southeast Asia and the Chinese* (Singapore: Heinemann Educational Books (Asia); Sydney: Allen & Unwin for the Asian Studies Association of Australia, 1981), pp. 249–60.

³ Examples of more ambitious models include S.G. Redding, *The Spirit of Chinese Capitalism* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1988); Peter Berger and Hsin-Huong

a serious historical dimension, or has taken account of the extraordinary depth and diversity of China's interactions with Southeast Asia. Jennifer Cushman was one of the few scholars who devoted her life to exploring this historical depth, and the essays in this book are an indication of the conviction of the authors that that work must continue.

The history of the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia demonstrates cases of total integration into the host society, of long-term coexistence and competition with it, and of a variety of options in between. It has produced "a wondrous array of acculturative, adaptive, and assimilative phenomena" (Skinner, below). Chinese have been pulled towards different identities at various times, as Chinese sojourners abroad, as Westernized colonial subjects, as loyal citizens of their adopted countries, as revolutionary communists or modern multinational capitalists.⁴ Numerous specialized monographs have appeared on their political loyalties to Beijing, Taipei, or a Southeast Asian capital, on their patterns of social and kinship organization, their economic roles, religious beliefs, and educational experience, but there have been very few comparative historical surveys since Purcell's pioneering work first published over forty years ago.⁵

A comparative survey on the scale of Purcell is now badly needed. This book is not intended to provide that, though it shows how outdated Purcell's treatment has become. It consists of various enquiries into the ways in which Southeast Asian Chinese societies have come to be what they are

Michael Hsiao, eds., *In Search of an East Asian Development Model* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1988); Gary Hamilton, ed., *Business Networks and Economic Development in East and Southeast Asia* (Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 1991); C. Barton, "Trust and Credit: Some Observations concerning Business Practices of Overseas Chinese Traders in South Vietnam" in Linda Lim and L.A. Peter Gosling, eds., *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, 2 vols. (Singapore and Ann Arbor: Maruzen and University of Michigan, Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 1983); Wong Siu-lun, "The Chinese Family Firm: A Model", *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 36, no. 1 (1980): 58–72.

⁴ The most thorough treatment of this subject is provided by Jennifer Cushman and Wang Gungwu, eds., *Changing Identities of the Southeast Asian Chinese since World War II* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 1988).

⁵ Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia* (1951; 2nd ed., London: Oxford University Press for RIIA, 1965). The only other comprehensive survey of the subject is Mary Somers Heidhues, *Southeast Asia's Chinese Minorities* (Melbourne: Longman Australia Ltd., 1974). The collection of studies edited by Lim and Gosling, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, is valuable, but heavily Malaysia-oriented. Good country-based bibliographies of European-language writings on the subject are given in Leo Suryadinata, ed., *The Ethnic Chinese in the ASEAN States* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1989); for a more selective and evaluative literature survey see J.A.C. Mackie, "Overseas Chinese Entrepreneurship", *Asia-Pacific Economic Literature*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1992): pp. 41–64. On the Newly Industrialized Countries and "Neo-Confucian values", see George Hicks, "The Four Little Dragons: An Enthusiast's Reading Guide", *Asia-Pacific Economic Literature*, vol. 3, no. 2 (1989): pp. 35–49.

today. My aim in this introduction is to set the scene and draw together some of the strands in that complex story, especially those that relate to the contentious issues that constantly arise about the ethnic, national and cultural identities (or, in older terminology, of the “loyalties”) of the Southeast Asian Chinese, and how far they have become “Southeast Asian” in outlook. It is an issue that has come into prominence in the 1990s with the speculation about a renewal of earlier “resinification” tendencies, associated with the surge of Southeast Asian Chinese capital into the booming economies of southern China and Hong Kong.

This book shows as never before the extraordinary range of Chinese interactions with Southeast Asian societies. Not only are Chinese one (or several) of the world’s greatest migrant peoples; they have been migrating into the region for hundreds of years, providing an example at some time or place of almost every conceivable relationship with independent, colonial, and post-colonial systems; Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, and animist societies. Many members of the “indigenous” elite who have led the nationalist reaction against overseas Chinese economic prominence were themselves descended from Chinese immigrants on the male side some generations earlier. The present role of Chinese enterprise in the region needs to be understood, therefore, within the context of this long history of interaction, as the essays in this volume make clear. The successes, like the failures, arise less from some mysterious element in the “Chinese” psyche than in the particular situation in which certain migrant groups found themselves.⁶

The essays begin with Wang Gungwu, developing his long-standing concern with “sojourning” (temporary migration) as a feature both of traditional Chinese emigration patterns and today’s worldwide population movements among upwardly mobile professionals with “wealth or highly portable professional skills”. This kind of migration is very different, he notes, from the large-scale but usually temporary Chinese coolie migration that characterized the period 1870–1930. Yet it was then that the concept of the sojourner came into use “with the elegant name *huaqiao*”, which replaced a variety of earlier but less suitable terms and carried an implication that the Chinese migrants had only departed temporarily from China’s shores.

The sojourning concept grew out of assumptions about the fundamental impropriety of leaving the Middle Kingdom, which showed itself also in repeated prohibitions over the centuries against private trade or emigration. Although based primarily on concern about the activities of enemies of the dynasty in regions beyond its control, the policy embodied the

⁶ This point also emerges strongly in Ruth McVey, ed., *Southeast Asian Capitalists* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Southeast Asia Publication Series, 1992).

notion that it was not only disloyal but unfilial for Chinese to settle overseas for long periods, since it entailed a neglect of the obligation to tend the tombs of one's ancestors. Professor Wang notes that use of the word *huaqiao* helped to maintain the pretence that sojourning was merely a temporary process, not a step towards permanent settlement, even in the period of officially sanctioned, massive labour migration from the 1860s onwards.

Sojourners were regarded as Chinese nationals by both the authorities in China and the colonial governments in Southeast Asia until after World War II. China's nationality law of 1909 based on the doctrine of *jus sanguinis* meant that the issue of dual nationality arose even then, although it caused relatively little concern to the colonial authorities except in the Netherlands Indies. The possibility of *huaqiao* taking on the nationality of their place of residence, which was a hot political issue in the 1950s and 1960s, hardly arose in the colonial era except in Thailand, and in the Philippines Commonwealth after 1935. The transition to independence throughout Southeast Asia after World War II coincided with the closing of national frontiers, the ending of Chinese emigration and the rise of Southeast Asian nationalism. All the Chinese in the region came under pressure to adopt the nationality and identity appropriate to the country in which they lived. They had no choice but to become settlers and citizens of those countries, or suffer the disadvantages of alien status. Sojourning was no longer an option.

Sojourning is today becoming a world-wide feature of elite-level population movements, observes Wang Gungwu. While it has hitherto been regarded as a uniquely Chinese phenomenon, he suggests:

By including sojourning in the study of migration phenomena, we can better understand some underlying continuities between what has happened in Southeast Asia and what is becoming common again in the globalization of people movements today . . . sojourning . . . has become a global phenomenon.

We live in a world in which international borders are proving to be much more porous than they were fifty years ago and large numbers of people are living and working in countries other than their homelands. Most of them are "venturesome and entrepreneurial people", observes Wang Gungwu, and sojourning for long periods prior to the decision to settle in another country has long been common among them. Amongst the diverse groups of sojourners in North America, Australia and Europe, the overseas Chinese are now among the foremost, although in Southeast Asia they are now obliged to become settlers, restricted to very limited visits abroad as sojourners.

Like the other contributions to this book, Professor Wang's paper illustrates how a historical perspective can deepen our understanding of the situations in which the Southeast Asian Chinese now find themselves.

Unless we comprehend those processes and the historical circumstances from which they have arisen we are likely to misinterpret the social dynamics which have made their communities what they are today. They are no longer, if they ever were, simply transplanted Chinese with a common culture, business interests and outlook, as implied by some of the more celebratory writings about them as "The Dragon's Seed". They are nationals of the countries in which they reside, increasingly tinged by those countries' culture and values. Hence Sino-Thai and Sino-Indonesian would be preferable terms, though the latter has not yet gained wide acceptance. Their experiences in Southeast Asia have differed considerably from one country to another and shaped their outlooks accordingly. What they have in common is not so much a language or inheritance as identification by themselves and others as "Chinese".

The paper by G. William Skinner on the development of three "creolized" Chinese societies in the Philippines, Java and Malaysia over a period of several centuries reveals how very different each has been in its relationship with its host community, and how that came to determine the various patterns of integration or assimilation that are observable there even today. Cases of total integration into the host society can be found (the Philippine Mestizos being an example), of long-term but separate coexistence (as in Malaysia and Indonesia) and a variety of options in between.

Skinner concludes with the observation that the three stories of his creolized communities have very different endings, despite their similar beginnings. The culture and language of the Chinese Mestizos in the Philippines are extinct, those of the *baba* in Malaya are dying. The *peranakan* culture of the Chinese in Java, however, "survives reasonably intact", in a unique but rather uncomfortable relationship with "the ethnic diversity that is modern Indonesia". It is an illuminating comment on a topic that only he has been able to examine in that sort of comparative perspective.

Reid's essay takes this concern with shifting patterns of assimilation and sinification further back in time, arguing that a process of cultural fusion occurred in the fifteenth century, producing new elites in Java, Luzon, and the Malay world. His survey of the zigzag pattern of contrasting active and passive phases in China's relations with Southeast Asia over six centuries underlines a point that has direct relevance to the post-Cold War changes in the relationships between the Middle Kingdom and the lands to its south which were once numbered among its tributary states. Instead of a linear trend towards either assimilation or sinification, we discern a series of fluctuations from one end of a spectrum to another, a characteristic of China's relations with the region also in the late twentieth century.

An example of the way the early *peranakan* communities in Java reacted to the internal stresses associated with changing cultural and national

identities is given in Claudine Salmon's piece on an organization founded in Surabaya in 1864 to promote a revival of Chinese customs, dress and Confucian doctrines in order to prevent a loss of the sense of Chineseness. This occurred long before the foundation of the Chinese Association (THHK) in 1908 in Batavia, which has previously been regarded as a watershed in *peranakan* Chinese history in Java and one of the first manifestations of a new Chinese nationalism there. This movement (the *Hokkien Kong Tik Soe*, or "Temple of the Merits of Fujian") was directed particularly against the tendency for *peranakan* to adopt local (Muslim) beliefs and burial practices and was intended to restore Confucian order and eradicate superstition among the better educated Chinese. Fears of a loss of Chinese identity were apparently the driving force here, long before the turn-of-century wave of Chinese nationalism accompanied by Chinese schooling made this a matter of concern to the community, at a time when large numbers of new arrivals (*totok*) from China were starting to threaten their cultural and social dominance.⁷

Mary Somers Heidhues deals in her essay with a generally neglected aspect of the story of the Southeast Asian Chinese, the past and present development of the various agricultural and fishing communities. We tend to assume that the vast majority of the Chinese are urban dwellers engaged in commercial or manufacturing activities, but if we focus on them alone "the typical may obscure perceptions of the significant". In Malaya as many as 30 per cent of all Chinese were living in rural villages as late as 1970 and another 23 per cent in small towns of one to ten thousand people. In Riau only 21 per cent of the Chinese population was urban and there were several other regions of heavy rural concentrations of Chinese, most notably in West Kalimantan and parts of Sarawak, where they have long been engaged in agriculture. Her article is a valuable reminder that most of the Chinese migrants who came to Southeast Asia between 1860 and 1930 were from rural backgrounds and many took up rural occupations as cash crop farmers, fishermen or miners. The shift into urban occupations came much later for most of them.

In some parts of the region, the rural Chinese have lived alongside indigenous farmers for generations and become more fully assimilated into the social and cultural life of their communities than is generally the case in the larger towns. They tend to be forgotten people in these days when the wealthy and thrusting entrepreneurs of the metropolis are attracting the lion's share of attention, but fifty or a hundred years ago they were very important elements in the Southeast Asian Chinese communities everywhere.

⁷ L.E. Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism: The Genesis of the Pan-Chinese Movement in Indonesia, 1900-1916* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1980).

The extent to which Chinese in all classes have negotiated a place for themselves in Southeast Asian societies helps explain the enduring popularity of Thai versions of the Chinese "Romance of the Three Kingdoms", as analyzed by Craig Reynolds in his essay. Apart from becoming accepted since the late eighteenth century as part of Thailand's high literary culture, the romance has in the twentieth century entered the realm of popular culture in the form of plays, comic books, television drama, treatises on military tactics, and "how to" manuals for the up-and-coming business manager. Reynolds suggests a method for understanding how the Romance has been translated, disseminated, fragmented, commodified, and mythified in modern Thai consciousness. The Romance in all its myriad forms is emblematic of the vitality of Sino-Southeast Asian culture, and a hitherto overlooked source for understanding it.

Developing a method for understanding a Southeast Asian society in whose history the Middle Kingdom played a large part is also a task undertaken by O.W. Wolters in his essay on a Vietnamese historian writing in the late fifteenth century. The whole corpus of Chinese literature and models of Chinese political behaviour were available to Vietnamese rulers and their historians by means of the Chinese writing system. Thus many centuries after Vietnam gained its independence from China, Ngo Si Lien composed his chronicle using Chinese norms of "a proper imperial state" and unflattering comparisons with the earlier Tran dynasty against which his own state had to be measured. Using a strategy of reading to pry open the chronicle's meanings, Wolters sees through the surface Chineseness of Vietnamese political culture to the characteristically Southeast Asian society against whose "weaknesses" Lien was warning. Such "weaknesses" were, in fact, signs of a traditionally cohesive Vietnamese polity.

A millennium of migration

Chinese influence in Southeast Asia is often contrasted with that of India, which appears far greater in cultural terms (beginning with writing scripts and religious systems) except in the case of Vietnam. Chinese ships, traders, and settlers in Southeast Asia have probably been more numerous than Indian since about 1400 (though with the interruptions Reid shows). Nevertheless their impact outside Vietnam tended to be greater in the area of technology than in high culture, perhaps because of the barrier of Chinese ideograms. Chinese political concepts were not readily transferred to "barbarian" tributary states which paid homage to the Chinese emperor in return for seals of investiture, although, as Reynolds suggests, historiography has no doubt underestimated the extent to which aspects of Chinese political culture have been internalized by Southeast Asian societies, especially in the modern period.

The Chinese who came to Southeast Asia were merchants (*shang*), not mandarin literati for the most part, and carried with them Taoist and Buddhist values more than Confucian ones—but above all “the values of trade”.⁸ The many Southeast Asian officials who were of Chinese birth or descent tended to concern themselves with commerce and the tributary relation with China, not with royal ritual like the Brahmins at many courts. Hence, although this book reveals Southeast Asian societies to be far more open to Chinese and other cultures than the Western literature has allowed, the region struck European observers as being much more part of the Indian than of the Chinese world (hence Greater, or Further, India).

The contacts between China and Southeast Asia prior to the surge of emigration from southern China in the late nineteenth century are well described by Reid and Skinner in this volume, and need only be summarized briefly here. The great Chinese naval expeditions to the *Nanyang*, or South Seas, which Reid refers to as “the early Mongol spurt” of the 1290s and “the early Ming gush” of the early 1400s, were the most famous of the officially sponsored Chinese voyages into the region, but they were also the last. Trading voyages by private shippers from southern China continued irregularly and finally received some official recognition after 1567, despite the Ming bans. The numbers of Chinese residing abroad increased rapidly thereafter, reaching substantial proportions of the total population in many areas in the late eighteenth century. The absolute number of Chinese migrants grew enormously, however, with the intensification of colonial rule in Southeast Asia and the sharp increase in cash crop production in the late nineteenth century.

By the time this wave of “coolie” immigrants began to arrive in the 1860s, mostly on a contract or credit-ticket basis, “Chinese” (Mestizo) communities were already established in Siam, southern Vietnam and Cambodia, the Philippines, Java, Borneo, and Malaya-Singapore. The character of these communities was transformed by the flood of new immigrants, exceeding three hundred thousand a year for much of the period 1900–1930. Where established Sino-Southeast Asian or creole populations had already lost much of their Chinese language, the Philippines being the extreme case, this new influx encouraged them to reclassify themselves as not Chinese at all, but a native elite. Elsewhere, as Salmon (below) shows for east Java, it encouraged some resinification.

The vast majority of the Chinese who went to Southeast Asia as labourers in the years between the 1860s and 1930 did not intend to stay; they could quite accurately be described as sojourners who meant to remain only until they had saved enough money to return home with improved pros-

⁸ Wang Gungwu, “Trade and Cultural Values: Australia and the Four Dragons”, *ASAA Review*, vol. 11, no. 3 (1988), pp. 1–9.

pects. In Siam, returnees generally numbered between 60 and 80 per cent of arrivals during the decades when emigration from China was at its peak. Some stayed behind because they were too poor or indebted to return, others because they were beginning to claw their way upwards towards a more comfortable life. The new Chinese communities they created were more Chinese, more dynamic, and more aggressive, but they tended to lower the status of "Chineseness" to something more like a pariah category.

There were few women among the emigrants until the 1920s.⁹ Some of the newcomers settled down with local women as wives or concubines; others resorted to the prostitutes recruited by the big *towkays* (bosses) controlling the tin mines and plantations where single men were concentrated. Those frontier settlements, epitomized by the tin mines of Malaya and tobacco plantations of Sumatra, were in most cases rough and lawless places during the early years, with secret societies and clan or speech-group (*pang*) associations providing what rudimentary social support and even law and order were available.¹⁰ Neither the local rulers nor the colonial authorities had much capacity to control the Chinese, whose languages they rarely understood. They found it more convenient to rely on indirect rule through the officer system. They also relied heavily on Chinese tax farmers, and particularly those who controlled the lucrative opium, gambling or liquor monopolies.

The early years of the twentieth century were marked by profound changes, including abandonment by the colonial governments of the tax and opium farms, which hastened a decline in the moral authority of the Chinese officers appointed by the colonial rulers. This was also the period when nationalism, both Chinese and indigenous, began to redefine the political agenda. Chinese schools, newspapers, and reading clubs contributed to the dissemination of the radical and anti-colonial ideas of the Kuomintang and to a stronger sense of solidarity as Chinese rather than

⁹ Females never exceeded 10 per cent of all Chinese arrivals into Siam before 1918; in the 1920s, they amounted to 21 per cent of arrivals and a slightly higher proportion of the excess of arrivals over departures—Skinner, *The Chinese in Thailand: An Analytical History* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1957, pp. 190–91). In the Netherlands Indies, only 17 per cent of the foreign-born Chinese in 1930 were female in the Outer Islands and 22 per cent in Java. (Among local-born Chinese, women slightly exceeded men.) In Malaya, the female-male ratio in the Chinese population was only 21.5 per cent in 1911, 49 per cent by 1931 and 93 per cent in 1957 (Joyce Ee, "Chinese Migration to Singapore, 1896–1941", *JSEAH*, 2:1 (1961) p. 50). In the Philippines, the female-male ratio was only 7.6 per cent in 1918 and 23 per cent in 1939.

¹⁰ The speech-group associations, or *pang* (principally Cantonese, Hokkien, Teochiu, and Hakka), which were crucially important to poor Chinese immigrants in providing rudimentary social support, contacts, and in some cases jobs, became key institutions in the social and business networks of the wealthier *towkays* also, such as Tan Kah Kee, by the 1920–30s.

as members of a particular speech-group—Hokkien, Teochiu, Hakka or Cantonese. It resulted in a process of “resinification” of many *peranakan* and *baba* Chinese in Indonesia and Malaysia, and some sharpening of political antagonisms over economic and cultural issues. At the same time nationalist movements in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Vietnam mobilized local sentiment against Chinese immigration as well as against the colonial rulers.

Chinese nationalism aimed towards the reassertion of an ethnic and national identity as Chinese, and supported the drive for national self-strengthening in China.¹¹ Sun Yat-sen looked to the Southeast Asian Chinese for financial support and industrial investment in China. Solidarity was demanded with China’s resistance to Japan’s attacks, especially after 1931. The peak period of organized Chinese nationalism came with the Chinese National Salvation Movement between 1937 and 1941, which organized boycotts of Japanese goods and fund-raising drives in support of China’s war effort. The Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia during World War II, which brought tremendous hardships for the Chinese, and the anti-colonial struggles for national independence that followed, also stimulated Chinese nationalist sentiments, which intensified again in the decade after the Communist Party’s accession to power in China in 1949. These upheavals injected divisive ideological conflicts into the Southeast Asian Chinese communities. Loyalties towards Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Tse-tung conflicted frequently with prudential considerations of survival in the changing political and economic landscape during the twenty years after 1941.

Although Mao’s victory in 1949 gave a boost to Chinese nationalism, arousing new pride in China’s achievements and enthusiasm for the communist regime in Beijing in many parts of Southeast Asia, the euphoria did not last long. With the consolidation of the independent states of Southeast Asia, they required the Chinese to take on local citizenship and identity. The chaos resulting from the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution created disillusionment about the benefits communism had brought to China, especially among the commercially successful Chinese of the diaspora. The political emphasis of Chinese nationalism gave way in the 1960s to a more diffuse ethnic or cultural nationalism directed towards the preservation of a distinctive Chinese identity within the plural societies of Southeast Asia. Over the next twenty years, the bonds of sentiment between the Southeast Asian Chinese and their ancestral homeland were more nearly severed than at any time since the sixteenth century.

¹¹ The most perceptive assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of Chinese nationalism in Southeast Asia is Wang Gungwu’s essay, “The Limits of Nanyang Chinese Nationalism”, in Wang Gungwu, *Community and Nation*, pp. 142–58.

It may be too soon to know whether a more prosperous and liberal China might renew those bonds in the 1990s.

The demographic dimension

Only rough estimates of the total numbers of Chinese residing in various parts of Southeast Asia are available for periods prior to the mid-nineteenth century. Even the figures produced by the various head counts or censuses during the later decades of the colonial era were often not entirely reliable, although those for Singapore and Malaysia are more accurate than others. The figures collated in the table are useful as rough indicators of the basic orders of magnitude.

Five main phases of Chinese population growth can be distinguished over the last fifteen hundred years or so.

During the first phase, between about the tenth and the sixteenth century AD, traders were visiting various Southeast Asian ports, remaining temporarily or assimilating individually, and rarely establishing permanent "Chinese" communities.

In the second period, between 1567 and about 1800, Chinese trading quarters in the major cities became large and permanent, notably in Ayutthaya/Bangkok, Manila, and Batavia. In the eighteenth century, mining and cash-cropping communities were established in Vietnam, Cambodia, Siam, Malaya, Bangka, and Borneo, and the creole populations of Java and the Philippines became relatively large. Because Southeast Asia's total population was still very sparse until its nineteenth-century explosion, the proportion of Chinese or Chinese Mestizos probably reached a peak around 1800. In Java in 1812 they were nearly 100,000 or 2 per cent;¹² in the Philippines about 120,000 or 5 per cent;¹³ in Siam between 15 and 30 per cent according to contemporary estimates, though only 230,000 or 5 per cent in Skinner's sober calculations.¹⁴ Newbold was one of the first to attempt a global estimate of Southeast Asia's Chinese, which he put at "nearly a million" around 1830,¹⁵ though this may be too high. Skinner points out in this volume that one of the largest groups was then in the Philippines and one of the smallest in Malaya, the reverse of the situation that obtained a century later.

The third phase, between about 1800 and 1860, saw the numbers of Chinese in the region increase gradually. Large numbers migrated to

¹² T.S. Raffles, *The History of Java* (London, 1817; reprint, Kuala Lumpur: OUP, 1965), vol. 1, p. 63.

¹³ Edgar Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life 1850-1898* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 25.

¹⁴ Skinner, *Chinese Society*, pp. 68-79.

¹⁵ T.J. Newbold, *British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca* (London: 1839), vol. 1, p. 9.

Chinese in Southeast Asia: population estimates 1800–1992, in thousands¹

	Thailand ²	Malaysia ³	Singapore	Indonesia			Philippines ⁴	Vietnam	Cambodia	Laos	Burma
				Total	Java	Outer Islands					
early 1800s	[203] (1825)	[14]	–	[185]	[100]	[85] ⁵	120 mestizos 7 Chinese				
1860	[337]	<100	50	[222]	149	[73]	290 mestizos 23 Chinese (1877)				
1900	[608]	532	165	537	[277]	260	41	[80]	[40]		
1930	648	1700	422	1233	582	651	110 (1935)	[200]	[100]	[3]	193
1960	2670	2674	1091 (1957)	2690				[800]	[250]	[40]	
1980	[6000] (1981)	4200	1800	[4100] ⁶							
1992	5800 (1992)	5200	2000	[7200]			800	800			1500

Sources: Where not otherwise indicated, these figures up to 1960 have been derived from Purcell, *The Chinese*, pp. 3, 43, 169–75, 232–34, 386. The 1980 figures are taken from Suryadinata, *The Ethnic Chinese*, p. 6, and the 1992 figures from *The Economist* 18 July 1992, p. 21.

Notes:

¹ Because Chinese were not enumerated as a separate category except in colonial censuses and Malaysian ones, many figures are necessarily very rough estimates based on some notional percentage. These speculative figures are in square brackets. The 1992 estimate for Indonesia (apparently based on a calculation of 4% of the total population), and the 1981 figure for Thailand, are almost certainly too high, while the 1987 figure for Indonesia may be too low.

² Estimates up to 1930 are those of Skinner, *Chinese Society*, pp. 79, 186, including both China-born and local born identifying as Chinese.

³ Before 1963, Malaya plus Sarawak and North Borneo.

⁴ Nineteenth century figures from Skinner in this volume. For 1903 and 1935 census figures we are indebted to K.C. Wong.

⁵ The editor's estimate, based on 6,000 in Bangka (Mary Somers Heidhues, *Bangka Tin and Mentok Pepper*, Singapore: ISEAS, 1992, pp. 21, 29), 3,000 in the Riau Archipelago (P.J. Begbie, *The Malayan Peninsula*, Madras: 1834, pp. 305–11), 65,000 in West Borneo (Purcell, *The Chinese*, p. 422), and an estimated 11,000 scattered elsewhere.

⁶ Suryadinata's estimate of 4.1 million for Indonesia 1981 seems to be based on a figure of 2.5 per cent of the total population (as in 1931). *The Economist* figure of 7.2 million represents 4 per cent of the total. It is unlikely any other methodology could have been utilized.

Bangkok (about seven thousand per year in the 1820s)¹⁶ and Singapore, but on the other hand the "Chineseness" of many Mestizos in the Philippines and elsewhere became attenuated to the point of disappearance. The rapid growth of the indigenous populations reduced the proportion of those calling themselves Chinese.

During the fourth period, from the 1860s until the onset of the 1930s Depression, high levels of emigration from southern China, mostly of unmarried, male contract coolies, brought about a large increase in the total numbers of Chinese in Southeast Asia, particularly in Singapore-Malaya and the Outer Islands of Indonesia, with less dramatic increases in Thailand, the Philippines, and Java, where the Chinese and Mestizo communities were already substantial. Most of the migrants (60 to 80 per cent at times) returned to China at the conclusion of their contracts, and as there were very few women amongst them until the 1920s, the migrants would have produced relatively few children who became identified as Chinese. Nevertheless the aggregate Chinese population of Thailand, Malaya, Singapore, and Indonesia increased between 1860 and 1931 from about 700,000 to 3.8 million, which implies an annual average rate of increase of 2.4 per cent overall, well above that of the indigenous populations. In Malaya, there were fears among Malays in the 1920s that they would be swamped numerically in their own land by the flood of Chinese. Surprisingly, however, the overall rate of increase for the Chinese in those four countries did not decline after 1931, after large-scale immigration had virtually ceased (except in Malaysia), for reasons that are discussed below.

In the fifth period, from 1931 to 1981, the average annual rate of increase in the Chinese population of the same four countries—Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia—appears to have been higher than it had been over the previous seventy years, despite the almost complete cessation of immigration from China. Only in Malaysia did the rate of increase decline.¹⁷ The high rates of Chinese population increase over this period, well in excess of the rates for the indigenous populations (except, again, in Malaysia), were presumably due to their large families and low mortality rates, made possible by their higher income levels and better education. Family planning has started to reduce preferred family size among the more educated Chinese in recent years, although not yet enough to offset the high-fertility effects of a relatively youthful age distribution in the mid-twentieth century. Natural increase in an era of more normal sex

¹⁶ Suebsaeng Promboon, "Sino-Siamese Tributary Relations 1282-1853" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1971), p. 305.

¹⁷ One reason for the low Malaysian figure may have been migration by the Malayan Chinese to Singapore, another the heavy casualties suffered by them during World War II and the 1948-60 Emergency.

ratios has apparently been a more powerful factor than high male-only immigration rates in producing rapid population increase in this minority group.

Finally, it is worth extrapolating these figures into the future, since the aggregate number of Southeast Asians of Chinese descent will almost certainly reach 35 million within the next quarter century, nearly ten times the 1931 total—unless the rate of increase of the Chinese communities falls very sharply indeed (the indigenous population, by contrast, is likely to have increased six-fold over the same period). If their self-identification as Chinese is not outweighed by a powerful sense of identification with their Southeast Asian host societies and effective socio-economic integration over that time, such numbers are likely to cause considerable alarm, or worse, amongst the latter.

Economic roles

The stereotyped notion of the overseas Chinese as predominantly shopkeepers, traders or coolie labourers in the early days, or as the wealthy business magnates of the 1980s who control the great conglomerates that have become an outstanding feature of Southeast Asian economic life, distracts our attention away from the fact that the economic roles of the Southeast Asian Chinese have in fact been highly diverse and fluid throughout the twentieth century. They have been changing along broadly similar lines in all parts of the region as the Chinese have adapted to the gradually changing circumstances of each economy. But slightly different patterns have developed in each country, underlining the point yet again that local conditions are just as crucial in determining success or failure as any set of predisposing factors common to all Chinese. In some commercial avenues the Chinese have flourished in Southeast Asia (e.g. tin mining and rubber cultivation in Malaysia and Thailand), whereas in others they have stagnated (e.g. the Bangka tin miners or West Kalimantan pepper producers mentioned by Somers Heidhues), or else burned their fingers badly in speculative and risky activities like rice milling and trading in Thailand, which proved to be a springboard into more lucrative fields for some family firms like the Wanglees and Lamsams in Thailand, but ultimately disastrous for many others.¹⁸

¹⁸ On the Chinese tin miners of Bangka, see Mary Somers Heidhues, *Bangka Tin*; on a tin mining family in southern Thailand, Jennifer Cushman, *Family and State. The Formation of a Sino-Thai Tin-mining Dynasty, 1797–1932* (Kuala Lumpur: OUP, 1991). On Sino-Thai rice-milling families, and the economic roles of the Chinese in Thailand more generally, Akira Suehiro, *Capital Accumulation in Thailand 1855–1985* (Tokyo: The Center for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1989). On economic roles more generally, see J.A.C. Mackie, “Changing Economic Roles and Ethnic Identities of the Southeast Asian Chinese: A Comparison of Indonesia and Thailand” in Cushman and Wang, eds., *Changing Identities*.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Chinese tax farmers and "opium kings" were the wealthiest and most powerful figures in the various Chinese communities, controlling vast networks of distributors and henchmen, often in association with the secret societies. The situation changed as opium farms came under attack between about 1890 and 1910. Tin mining, rice milling and trading, retail and wholesale trade, shipping, and, to a small degree, rubber cultivation or trading became the major paths to wealth after 1900 (and, in the unique case of the Oei Tiong Ham Concern in Semarang, sugar production) and, later, small-scale manufacturing and food processing. The bulk of the Chinese immigrants who were pouring into Southeast Asia at that time, however, were poor, working on mines, construction works or (more rarely) as plantation labourers. While most of these returned home at the conclusion of their contracts, many moved on to become artisans or small shopkeepers in the towns or the rural frontier areas of Southeast Asia, particularly the Outer Islands of the Netherlands Indies, British Borneo and southern Thailand.¹⁹ Between about 1930 and the 1960s, the disturbed years of Japanese occupation, decolonization, and political instability, Chinese, most often the China-born Chinese not associated with the colonial structure, moved into all sorts of intermediary niche occupations, taking over economic roles previously performed by the colonial masters but frequently also displacing indigenous rivals and arousing nationalist sentiments against them.²⁰ In Wang Gungwu's phrase, they had "wealth without power", being politically impotent and vulnerable to various forms of nationalist backlash or discrimination.

Since the 1960s, both their economic roles and their socio-economic status have changed considerably as the momentum of economic growth has picked up in all the ASEAN countries except the Philippines. The foremost Chinese businessmen have moved up to the commanding heights of all the economies of the region as the Europeans have moved out, while at the lower levels most of the poorer Chinese have been able to transfer from labouring jobs, although less so from agricultural pursuits and fisheries in the old-established rural enclaves described by Somers Heidhues. Fortunately for them, the prominent parts played by Chinese businessmen

¹⁹ On the opium trade in Java, see James Rush, *Opium to Java* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990); the movement of Chinese traders into the frontier areas of Indonesia is traced in J.A.C. Mackie, "The Geographical Dispersal and Occupations of the Indonesian Chinese, 1900–1930", *Asian Culture* (Singapore), 14 (1990): 5–22.

²⁰ The resentment and discrimination directed against the Chinese in various parts of Southeast Asia is well covered in Frank Golay et al., *Underdevelopment and Economic Nationalism in Southeast Asia* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1969). On Indonesia, see also Twang Peck Yang, "Indonesia Chinese Business Communities in Transformation" (Ph.D. dissertation, Australian National University, 1988).

in bringing about the economic transformations achieved there have made the governments of the region realize that it is foolish to kill the geese that have been laying so many golden eggs. They have learnt, too, that anti-Chinese measures can only be made effective at a very high cost to the national economy in terms of disruption of trade channels, reduced efficiency, and income foregone.²¹ So the Southeast Asian Chinese have been riding high in all the ASEAN states in the 1980s—slightly less so in Malaysia under the New Economic Policy, although even there it is relative deprivation and discrimination that worry the middle-class Chinese more than any decline in real incomes.

Diverse identities

The diversities to be found among the Southeast Asian Chinese demand explanation as well as the characteristics thought to be common to them. Maurice Freedman remarked, in an essay providing “a longer view” of the Southeast Asian Chinese and their place in the history and society of the region, that they

are of different nationalities, speak many languages, follow several religions, and live many styles of life. And, as some of them have painfully discovered by going back to one of the two Chinas, many are so little Chinese in their outlook that they are foreigners in several senses in the land of their forefathers.²²

The Chinese in Southeast Asia were becoming more attached to the countries they had settled in by the 1960s, he noted, identifying increasingly as Thais, Indonesians, Singaporeans, and so on, although in varying degrees and at different speeds. Yet it was by no means the case that “the adjective ‘Chinese’ had come irretrievably adrift from the noun ‘China’”. While the overseas Chinese may seem to be “rootless cosmopolitans” in a world of narrow-minded nationalists, they still regarded China at that time as “an ancestral land, however remote it may be in distance measured by generations, knowledge, or political sympathy”.²³ National identity is a slippery concept in any country, but it has been

²¹ Other reasons why “the Chinese problem” is receding in intensity have been noted by Ruth McVey’s perceptive Introduction to her *Southeast Asian Capitalists*, especially the fact that a congruence of interests between private capitalists and “politico-bureaucrats” has developed, and because the economies are “expanding beyond the point where a tiny minority can fill the middle levels” (p. 20).

²² Maurice Freedman, “The Chinese in Southeast Asia: A Longer View” in Maurice Freedman and G. William Skinner, eds., *The Study of Chinese Society. Essays by Maurice Freedman. Selected and Introduced by G. William Skinner* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979), pp. 20–21.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

a peculiarly difficult problem for the overseas Chinese to deal with, for the Chinese "have never had a concept of identity, only a concept of Chineseness, of being Chinese and becoming un-Chinese".²⁴ Prior to World War II,

the question of Chineseness was thought to have been a simple one. All who thought of themselves as Chinese were Chinese. They were conscious of their family system, their place of origin in China, and their ties with other Chinese. . . . These factors had created a core of sentiment which could be strengthened and expanded by stories about the Chinese past and reasons for pride in a more or less abstract 'Great Tradition' of Chinese civilization. This produced a kind of identity which could be appropriately called 'historical'.²⁵

All migrants experience identity problems in some degree as they choose between retaining their original nationality or adopting a new one, wrestling with all the associated dilemmas of loyalty and the sense of belonging. Assimilation into the society and culture of their country of residence is always a lengthy process and often an impossible one. Integration is a more realistic goal than assimilation in the plural societies of Southeast Asia.²⁶ There have been bitter arguments on these issues within the various Southeast Asian Chinese communities throughout the twentieth century, particularly over the loss of Chinese identity and demands for resinification, since historical circumstances have made the choices facing them more than usually complex, both during the colonial era and since.

In the colonial era, the overseas Chinese could have it both ways on the citizenship issue, since China's support for *jus sanguinis* encouraged dual nationality. But ambivalence became increasingly difficult to maintain by the 1950s, for the independence of the Southeast Asian nations and the emergence of a rejuvenated China in 1949 made such attitudes highly suspect in the eyes of the indigenous nationalists. The Southeast Asian Chinese were called upon to demonstrate their loyalty to their countries of residence by renouncing any identification with China, implicitly or explicitly. Such demands often went beyond the legal issues of citizenship status: pressure to assume local names, as occurred in Indonesia and Thailand, to abandon the public display of Chinese charac-

²⁴ Wang Gungwu, "The Study of Chinese Identities in Southeast Asia", in Cushman and Wang, eds., *Changing Identities*, p. 1.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²⁶ The debate between advocates of assimilation (mainly middle-class Chinese professionals) and integration (spokesmen for the poorer Chinese to whom full assimilation was an unattainable luxury) was most fully thrashed out in Indonesia in the early 1960s; see Mary F. Somers, *Peranakan Chinese Politics in Indonesia* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Interim Reports Series, 1964) and Charles Coppel, *Indonesia's Chinese in Crisis* (Kuala Lumpur: OUP, 1983).

ters, and to close Chinese-language schools and associations. Public expressions of Chineseness such as big funeral processions or sumptuous weddings were sometimes discouraged where they were likely to arouse envy or resentment.²⁷

But there have always been pressures in the other direction also, including the lingering belief that communal solidarity should be preserved as a last-resort means of resisting racial discrimination or persecution. That has been particularly the case in Malaysia and Indonesia, where the prospects of real integration or assimilation have been far more remote than in Thailand or the Philippines. Rather than steady progress towards assimilation of the ethnic Chinese over the past eighty years, there has been a series of zigzag movements on various planes, sometimes towards this goal, sometimes away from it, depending largely on local circumstances but partly also on the developments in China itself.

Since World War II, most Southeast Asian Chinese have been inclined to turn their backs on China and to become increasingly "Southeast Asian" in outlook and socio-political identity (i.e. as Sino-Thai, or Sino-Indonesian, or Malaysian Chinese etc.), especially after the excesses of the Cultural Revolution in the mid-1960s. The appeal made by the socio-economic achievements of Mao's regime in its early years soon diminished as the political turmoil and economic chaos it later produced became more evident. Meanwhile, the rapid growth achieved by the ASEAN countries over that period began to bring unprecedented prosperity to many Southeast Asian Chinese from the 1960s onwards, making the prospect of a "return" to China still less attractive.

But those tendencies towards dissociation from China in favour of their Southeast Asian places of residence may be weakening in the 1990s, as China under Deng Xiaoping becomes increasingly capitalist and dynamic (especially in the southern provinces). Wealthy Southeast Asian Chinese are already seizing the new opportunities for profitable investments there, often in conjunction with leading Hong Kong or Taiwan businessmen. There are reports of a revival of interest in Chinese language and the cultural heritage it embodies, both for its instrumental utility in commerce and because of a widespread belief that Neo-Confucian values are in some way partly responsible for the economic success of East Asia over recent decades. While it would be going too far to say that another process of "resinification" is taking place among the Southeast Asian Chinese, there are indications in the early 1990s that the pendulum may be starting to swing back in that direction.

²⁷ On restrictions of the public display of Chineseness, see J.A.C. Mackie, "Anti-Chinese Outbreaks in Indonesia, 1959-1968", in J.A.C. Mackie, ed., *The Chinese in Indonesia. Five Essays* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson for AIIA, 1976) and Coppel, *Indonesia's Chinese in Crisis*.

If the political and ideological barriers that have alienated the Southeast Asian Chinese from China since 1949 continue to crumble in the 1990s they may eventually be seen as no more than a momentary historical anomaly. In that event a new and unpredictable chapter in the long story of the Southeast Asian Chinese and their links with China may be about to unfold.

Sojourning: The Chinese Experience in Southeast Asia

Wang Gungwu

The last project Jennifer Cushman and I worked on together at the Australian National University was the changing identities of the Southeast Asian Chinese, but we had also explored several other issues during the ten years we were colleagues there. Among these was one that I particularly regret we did not have time to work on, concerning the nature of the Southeast Asian Chinese as migrant communities. When we first met in London, I was writing about the origins of the term *huaqiao*, the Chinese sojourner, in the context of assimilationist or integrationist policies of the new nation-states of the Southeast Asian region.¹ These nascent states were much influenced by the melting-pot theories current at the time and were deeply suspicious of, if not downright hostile to, the concept of sojourning (that is, temporarily residing) that the term *huaqiao* seemed to be encouraging. The continued use of the term was widely seen to be contrary to nation-building plans and efforts.

In the English language, the word “sojourner” denotes someone visiting very briefly, definitely planning to return home after the visit. It is not a common word and not part of the lexicon of migration studies. There we find a set of terms for the permanent migrant—emigrant, immigrant, colonist, and settler—distinguished from others such as students, refugees, strangers, foreigners, and aliens. The concept embodied in the Chinese

¹ “A Note on the Origins of *Hua-ch'iao*” was originally written for a festschrift in honour of Professor C.R. Boxer (subsequently abandoned) and then given as a seminar paper in the Department of Far Eastern History, Australian National University in 1976; first published in *Masalah-masalah Internasional Masakini* 7, ed. Lie Tek Tjeng (Jakarta: Lembaga Research Kebudayaan Nasional-LIPI, 1977), pp. 7–18; and collected in Wang Gungwu, *Community and Nation: Essays on Southeast Asia and the Chinese* (Singapore: Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) and Sydney: George Allen & Unwin Australia, for the ASAA, 1981), pp. 118–27.

term *qiaoju*, meaning longer visits and even extended periods of stay, sometimes for generations, did not fit easily into the discourse on migration. It was, therefore, thought to be peculiar to the Chinese and not applicable to other people. I shall seek to show in this essay that this is not so and that, by including the concept of sojourning in the study of migration phenomena, we can better understand certain underlying continuities between movements between China and Southeast Asia before 1940 and a new global phenomenon today.

Sojourning, including extended periods of stay, has been practised by venturesome and entrepreneurial individuals and trading communities in a wide variety of historical contexts. When conditions were favourable, many such people finally made a decision not to return home. In that context, sojourning was a prelude to eventual migration. Whether it is a variant form of migration—that is, something that might be called experimental migration over long periods of time or migration with extended options—needs closer study. I have argued elsewhere that, if we examine early forms of migration closely, sojourning was pervasive in Asia and elsewhere for centuries.² It was only following the rise of the modern nation-state, and its demands on migrants to settle and identify with it, that the idea of residing temporarily, without any prior commitment to settle, came to be considered suspect and not to be acknowledged, least of all encouraged. Yet, despite the assimilationist pressures placed on settlers by national governments, migration in one form or another has grown remarkably in recent decades. Following the communications and transport revolution that has made the world a more interlocked and interdependent place, sojourning has grown, along with that broader phenomenon of migration, and become a global phenomenon.³

My essay on the origins of the term *huaqiao* pointed out that it was no longer acceptable for Southeast Asian Chinese in the new nation-states

² My first effort to assess the significance of the concept of sojourning was a keynote lecture given at an international conference on Chinese emigration held at the University of Hong Kong in December 1984: "Patterns of Chinese Migration in Historical Perspective" in *Observing Change in Asia: Essays in Honour of J.A.C. Mackie*, ed. R.J. May and William J. O'Malley (Bathurst, NSW: Crawford House Press, 1989), pp. 33–48; reprinted in Wang Gungwu, *China and the Chinese Overseas* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1991), pp. 3–21.

This was followed by the Annual Lecture given to the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society in Kuala Lumpur in 1985: "Migration Patterns in History: Malaysia and the Region", *JMBRAS*, 58:1 (1985), pp. 43–57; reprinted in Wang Gungwu, *Community and Nation: China, Southeast Asia and Australia* (new edition) (St. Leonard's, NSW: ASAA with Allen & Unwin, 1992), pp. 168–86.

³ This is explored in my essay "Migration and its Enemies", presented to a conference on Global History in Bellagio, Italy, in July 1991, and published in *Conceptualizing Global History*, ed. Bruce Mazlish and Ralph Buultjens (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1993), pp. 131–51.

to hang on to the status of being temporarily resident in their adopted country and for the governments in Beijing and Taipei to continue calling them *huaqiao*.⁴ The term had become a politically loaded one popularized in order to encourage the Chinese so described to be loyal and patriotic towards China. That was unfortunate, because the act of sojourning in itself, like that of migrating or settling down, need not carry any political significance. Politics enters the scene only when large numbers of people are organized to serve political interests. Thus, when the Southeast Asian Chinese are viewed as migrants who have to choose between settling down or keeping the option open to return to their original homes, the fact that they might have started off as sojourners matters very little. It is unimportant whether Chinese who decided to settle down were at some earlier time referred to as migrants or sojourners. It was the treatment received in the host country, their prospects there, and conditions in their place of origin that led them to decide whether to stay or return.

The starting point in examining the Chinese experience is to ask, why did the Chinese have the idea of sojourning and not that of voluntary migration, that is, departing from one's own country in order to find homes elsewhere? The modern Chinese term for migrant, *yimin*, is derived from the phrase *yimin shibian* (moving people to support border areas as military colonies) or *yimin tongcai* (moving people to ease economic conditions, usually because of famine or other natural calamities). Both describe decisions by the authorities to move people somewhere else.⁵ Thus *yimin*, in an agrarian society, implies movement enforced by officials away from one's own land or village. It is therefore understandable that traditionally the Chinese have never viewed migration as a voluntary act but rather as a great evil or calamity to be avoided, something that would occur only when rendered absolutely necessary by war or natural disaster.

Another equally unattractive term is *liumin*, which, when used to designate people running away, is closer to conveying the idea of emigrating. But this term was used to refer to displaced persons, homeless and wandering about in search of a place to settle—in some contexts, what we would call refugees. The modern term *nanmin* denoting refugees better conveys the sense of distress and need for compassionate treatment,

⁴ "The Origins of Hua-Ch'iao" in *Community and Nation: China, Southeast Asia and Australia*, 1992, pp. 1–10.

⁵ Both terms come from classical texts dating from the Han dynasty or earlier. A good discussion of the terms for migration and colonization in traditional China can be found in Li Changfu, *Zhongguo Zhimin Shi* [A History of Chinese Colonization] (Zhongguo Wenhua Shi Congshu) (Chinese Cultural History Series) (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1936; reprint, Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 1966), chap. 1, pp. 1–20. *Yimin yu Zhongguo* [Migration and China] by Ge Jianxiong, Cao Shuji and Wu Songdi (Hong Kong: Zhonghua Press, 1992) provides a useful survey of the various kinds of involuntary *yimin* found at different periods of Chinese history.

whereas the older *liumin* suggests people whose anti-social behaviour and irresponsible acts had led to their homeless state and to their status as outcasts, vagrants, and even outlaws.⁶ This older term was easily extended, at a time when an official ban on emigration was in force, to people who had left China without permission. They were fugitives and rebels who were wilful and disloyal, in short, people who would be severely punished if they returned, rather like political refugees today.

It was against this background that the concept of being only temporarily absent from China became useful, if not essential. When no one would voluntarily leave home, everyone who did so was deemed merely to be sojourning. This status was permissible for officials sent away on imperial business and for people who left home to make a living, especially merchants and artisans who needed to travel abroad. For them, the relevant common terms were *luju* (*lu* meaning "travel"), *keju* (*ke* meaning "guest"), *yuju* (*yu* meaning "to reside away from home"), *jiju* (*ji* meaning "to lodge"), and other combinations that suggest short periods of sojourning. If these sojourners stayed away longer than was considered normal, then the term *liuyu* was used to refer to them (*liu* suggesting an uncertain period of drifting and wandering away from home). For more than a thousand years, the imperial courts of the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties were all aware that many Chinese went regularly to Korea, Japan, and Southeast Asia. Although some stayed away, raised families abroad, and never returned, they were, for all intents and purposes, either sojourners who had gone out to trade and would eventually return or defiant lawbreakers who dared not return for fear of severe punishment.

This official view was not unfounded. The basic pattern of Chinese migration before the middle of the nineteenth century was that of the *huashang*. These were Chinese merchants and their partners and employees who sojourned at overseas ports and cities, or miners and other workers organized as *kongsis* (ritual brotherhoods) to protect their industrial and business interests.⁷ Most returned regularly to China even though many would have had second families and homes abroad. The Chinese had no need for a concept like migration under such circumstances.

⁶ Wang Xuetai, *Zhongguo Liumin* (Wandering Peoples of China) (Hong Kong: Zhonghua Press, 1992) shows the historical links between *yumin* (vagabonds and vagrants) and *liumin*. I discussed this topic in a keynote speech to the International Symposium on Children and Migration, held in Hong Kong, 27 April, 1990: "Children in Chinese Migration History", *Proceedings*, International Social Service, Hong Kong, 1990, pp. 15–24.

⁷ For the organizations called *kongsis* see Wang Tai Peng, "The Word *Kongsi*: A Note", *JMBRAS*, 52:1 (1979) pp. 102–5, and "The Origins of Chinese *Kongsi*, with Special Reference to West Borneo" (MA thesis, Australian National University, 1977). For the basic pattern of *huashang* migration, see my "Patterns of Chinese Migration in Historical Perspective" (note 2 above).

Sojourners, who always had the option to settle or return, fitted not only Chinese official regulations and values but also local Southeast Asian expectations concerning foreign traders and their communities. Function and what seemed convenient or natural were of greater importance than migratory intention or political identification. Indeed, the pattern had existed since trading relations began between China and overseas countries; imperial officials of the Tang, Song, and Yuan dynasties had granted reciprocal access for similar foreign trading communities in Chinese cities and ports. After the Ming and Qing dynasties introduced restrictive controls and isolationist policies, Muslim, Indian, and, later, European merchants who wished to trade with China were no longer welcome; forced to establish their communities in Southeast Asia, they in effect sojourned in that region instead.⁸

Whatever the term used, the Chinese experience of sojourning varied considerably. Some were rice traders in the Chaophraya Valley around Ayutthaya; others were independent merchants or, more commonly, agents or employees of China-based merchants at a port in a Malay trading state. After the establishment of European power, some Chinese acted as intermediaries between the Dutch or English East India companies and riverine rulers or collection centres. By the nineteenth century, many Chinese merchants held official positions or were acting as compradores for European companies while others served as business advisers to indigenous kings and provincial governors. Yet others had become agents for labour recruitment from China, revenue farm bosses, and, in some cases concurrently, leaders of the local Chinese community. But, despite the diversity of their roles, what these sojourners from China did differed very little from what others from India, the Middle East, and Europe were doing. They were more numerous and formed larger local communities than the Indians, Arabs, and other Muslim merchants, while the Europeans were supported by their home governments and were sufficiently strong and well organized to set up local administrations in the region as a part of larger maritime empires.

A major transformation occurred during the nineteenth century when large numbers of contract workers left China to work the mines and plantations and service the growing urban centres in Southeast Asia. The *huagong* (mainly Chinese coolie labour) soon outnumbered the trading classes. Although most of the *huagong* did not stay long, they clearly

⁸ Chinese and Arabic sources on foreign traders at the southern ports of China during the Tang, Song, and Yuan dynasties confirm this picture. With Ming-Qing isolationism, the frustrations of the Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch are particularly revealing. The Portuguese alone found a solution when they settled in Macao, but both the Spanish and the Dutch failed to establish a firm base in Taiwan. It took two full-scale Anglo-Chinese wars in the mid-nineteenth century to enable all foreign merchants to sojourn on Chinese soil.

represented something everyone could recognize as labour migration on a large scale. Objectively speaking, there were now Chinese migrants, although these new migrants on the whole stayed for briefer periods than the sojourner communities. Interestingly, it was at the end of the nineteenth century that the Qing government abandoned the totally ineffectual ban on emigration that had remained policy intermittently since the Ming dynasty. And, not long afterwards, came for the first time the official politicization of the concept of sojourner, with the elegant name of *huaqiao*, thus confirming that the political leaders in China expected the Chinese abroad to play a role in China's future development.

How were the Chinese viewed in the region? Apart from some writings in Chinese by Vietnamese officials or descendants of Chinese in Vietnam and elsewhere in the region, Southeast Asian records tell us little about them directly. The reasons for this silence are unclear. It could be that, from the point of view of the local court scribe and historian, there were too few Chinese to matter, or that they were merely traders who came and went, leaving no mark on local political and ceremonial affairs. A third reason could be that, for the period before the arrival of the Europeans, China was perceived as powerful and arrogant. Native rulers resented Chinese claims to superiority and, after the Europeans arrived, the Chinese traders seemed too eager to work for the European companies; therefore, such people did not seem worthy of a place in their histories. Although we cannot be certain why the Chinese are rarely mentioned, the neglect of them in the records is not inconsistent with the picture of people who were mainly sojourning and not settling down anywhere for long. A similar neglect could be said to apply to smaller trading groups from other parts of Asia.⁹

By contrast, European documents refer to the ubiquitous Chinese presence from the very beginning. The Dutch, in particular, noted the usefulness of the Chinese as local experts and middlemen, more useful than other Asian traders, who were not as widespread and who did not have their inter-port networks. The Dutch, and later the English, did not hesitate to engage them to help their expansion of trading activities in the Archipelago during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They saw the Chinese as highly mobile; this would fit the picture of the permanent sojourner ready to follow opportunities wherever they led. The Spanish in the Philippines were more ambivalent. They welcomed Chinese traders

⁹ For the period from the mid-fifteenth century to the end of the seventeenth century, Anthony Reid's *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450–1680*, Vol. 1, *The Lands below the Winds* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, New Haven, 1988) provides some confirmation of this neglect. In comparison, European sources frequently refer to non-indigenous Asian traders and sailors, and native writings do describe the warlike Europeans against whom the rulers often had to fight.

and artisans but also realized that armed and lawless groups existed among them. Once it was clear that neither the late Ming nor the Qing court would lift a finger to help such Chinese, the authorities in Manila were quick to show force to fight them, cut down on the numbers of Chinese coming, and confine them to strictly controlled ghetto-like life. Even there, it was clear that most Chinese did not seek to migrate or settle down, though many of them left Chinese mestizo families in Manila and other local towns to keep the overseas end of their businesses going.

The picture began to change by the end of the eighteenth century. Significant Chinese trading communities had been formed in Hue, Ayutthaya (and, later, Bangkok), Batavia, Semarang, Manila, Melaka, and the new port of Penang. But, without specific references to their intentions, it would still be difficult to describe these Chinese as emigrants from China to Southeast Asia and their communities as settled migrant communities. Only the kingdom of Vietnam acknowledged that the Chinese could form something more than a transient trading community and accordingly allowed Chinese refugees who did not wish to live under the Manchu conquerors to own land and build rural settlements known as *Minh-huong* (Chinese villages). But it was accepted that these Chinese might consider themselves sojourners wishing one day to return to China permanently after the Manchus were overthrown.¹⁰

The port towns outside Vietnam, however, were seen as no more than market centres around which most Chinese were expected to live. It mattered little whether these Chinese were registered as residents by indigenous rulers in Thailand and most of the Malay Peninsula and Archipelago states or by European powers like Spain and the Netherlands. They were prepared to use the respective communities, in which they were but marginally settled, as the base from which they travelled in search of business and to transfer their trade if profits were better elsewhere. They were even prepared to migrate from one part to another within the region; this readiness can be seen as a precursor of the phenomenon of remigration of more recent decades, which I shall describe later. They were, in fact, *huashang* (merchant sojourners) or those in their service as well as those others also resident in their own communities outside China who aspired to become like them. The major advance on the earlier centuries for them was that they had now found ports that sustained regular and continuous trade and had opened up local trading networks for themselves, making

¹⁰ Two admirable examples have been studied by Ch'en Ching-ho: his introduction to the poetry collection of Trinh Hoai Duc (Zheng Huaide), *Genjai shiji (Can Trai Thi Tap)* (Collected Poems of Trinh Hoai Duc) (Hong Kong: New Asia Research Institute, 1962) and his *Chengtian Mingxiang she Chenshi Zhengpu [A Brief Study of the Family Register of the Trans, a Ming Refugee Family in Minh-huong-xa, Thua-Thien (Central Vietnam)]* (Hong Kong: New Asia Research Institute, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1964).

it less necessary to return to the controlled and restrictive markets in China.

Yet more changes were to come for these Chinese. Let me describe them as four stages that followed more or less in chronological order in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries:

1. the stage of the transitional states of the colonial or semi-colonial period following the industrial revolution in Europe;
2. the newborn nation-states of the second half of the twentieth century;
3. the prospect of remigration to the migrant states of the Americas and Australasia;
4. most recently, the extension of sojourning as part of the globalization of migration.

The last three are contemporary and overlap a little during the past four decades. But for the Chinese in Southeast Asia, the nation-state in the region came first, then the awareness of American and Australasian migration possibilities, and only afterwards did they become part of a global phenomenon. But these three and the first stage are closely related. They spring from modernization resulting from Western colonization and the challenge of anti-colonial nationalism, followed by the remarkable impact of technological advances, notably in the fields of international trade, and transport and communications, since World War II. I shall now take them in order and start with the transitional states.

Transitional states

I have called the colonial regimes in the Southeast Asian region (and to a lesser extent also the semi-colonial regime of Thailand) transitional states because they were never colonies in the true sense and (except for Thailand) never gained legitimacy in the eyes of the vast majority of their subjects. By contrast, European colonies in the Americas, Australasia, and South Africa were settled by colonists and became modern migrant states. The extension of colonial power during the nineteenth century over polities with their large indigenous population, foreign trading communities, and imported coolie labour, however, could only last as long as imperial power itself. In the meantime, they had the makings of, and were in transition towards, post-colonial states waiting to be shaped by national movements. These, if successful, were expected to become, not migrant states founded by colonists, settlers, and other migrants, but modern indigenous nation-states.

The period of the transitional states was one in which the role of the colonial regimes was to make money for the various European industrial empires either as sources for the raw materials needed for the factories back home or as markets for their manufactured goods. Either way trade was the primary concern. In the region, Chinese merchants joined the

Indians, Arabs, and Jews to provide good trading services; as none of them arrived as colonists or settlers, they could not be said, strictly speaking, to have set out to be migrants. Indeed, what describes them best is the word "sojourners". Many became valuable subjects in states that depended on the smooth flow of merchandise and the efficient supply of imported contract labour. Therefore, the transitional states were not concerned whether these sojourners intended to migrate or not. It was assumed that, if it was worth their while, many of them would settle down. If the port or towns remained prosperous with every prospect of becoming even more so, the descendants of these sojourners could be expected to remain indefinitely. At some point, they could be regarded as settlers.

The picture was somewhat different for those from China or the Indian subcontinent who were recruited to work in mines, plantations, and urban services. Broadly speaking, they fitted the pattern of labour migration to many other regions of the world at about the same time. A distinction could be made between those who were admitted as immigrants and permitted to look for work and those who were specially brought from other places on short-term contracts and were normally expected to return home at the expiry of their contracts. The latter were obviously not migrants and most of them did in fact leave after one or more contracts.

Who, then, can be considered as migrants? As statistics became more reliable by the beginning of the twentieth century, it is clear that, where the Chinese and the Indians were concerned, there was much regular coming from and going to China and India respectively. For the vast majority of them, what they were doing would more accurately be described as sojourning. Even those who had chosen to migrate from the start, including many who brought their families with them, could take advantage of greatly improved transport facilities and join the others in becoming sojourners if they so wished. By the 1920s and 1930s, when labour migration slowed down and eventually ended, the only question was how many of the migrants and sojourners would choose to settle. A few of the governments of these transitional states, like those of British Malaya and Thailand, did encourage settlement. But most of them were merely interested in controlling the numbers needed to support the colonial economy. In any case, everything would change with the coming of the Pacific War. After 1945, the question became whether erstwhile sojourners could adjust to the emerging nation-states that would succeed the transitional states. These nation-states would demand higher standards of loyalty and commitment from all those residing in their territories.

Nation-States

In the next stage, the new nationalist leaders in the region found that they not only had to build new nations quickly, but had to do so in the middle

of the Cold War between the powers representing the contending ideologies of capitalism and communism. This difficult position became acute when the Chinese Communist Party won power and the People's Republic of China was proclaimed in 1949. The new nation-states found themselves divided between those that sided with the Western powers and those that leaned towards China and the Soviet bloc.

In this context, the Chinese sojourners in the region were much more vulnerable than others. If they remained sojourners, they were forced to choose between mainland China and the Republic of China in Taiwan. If they decided to settle and become citizens of the newly independent states, they had to convince the national governments of their change of loyalties. Even then, they remained politically suspect. If the governments of their place of residence were sympathetic towards socialist China while they remained wedded to their capitalistic businesses, they were handicapped. If these governments, on the other hand, sided with the Western powers while they were inclined to socialist ideals, they were considered potentially subversive and still sojourners and pro-China at heart. Some native extremists even evoked racist and Nazi-type slogans like "once a Chinese, always a Chinese" and condemned the Chinese as totally untrustworthy.¹¹

The fact that China turned communist, however, was simply an added burden for these Chinese. It made their sojourning traditions seem sinister and their loyalty more dubious. What must be recognized is that sojourning by any ethnic group would have been questionable in the face of vigorous nation-building efforts. Nationalist leaders followed Western nationalist rhetoric closely and admired the integrationist or assimilationist view regarding immigrants, notably what has been described as the "melting pot" approach towards national unity. In extreme cases the Chinese were expected to give up being Chinese altogether. The more reasonable leaders realized that this could not be achieved quickly and were content

¹¹ It was in this context that G. William Skinner wrote his two authoritative volumes on the Chinese in Thailand and stressed that the Chinese could, if the right policy were followed, be assimilated in Southeast Asia. Today, scholars would tend to emphasize only degrees of political assimilation while pointing to the continued existence of Chinese ethnicity; see Cristina Blanc Szanton, "Thai and Sino-Thai in Small Town Thailand: Changing Patterns of Interethnic Relations" in *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, Vol. 2, *Identity, Culture & Politics*, ed. L.A. Peter Gosling and Linda Y.C. Lim (Singapore: Maruzen Asia, 1983), pp. 99–125; and her unpublished paper, "Ethnic Identities and Aspects of Class in Contemporary Central Thailand", presented to the June 1985 symposium at the Australian National University; an abstract is published in *Changing Identities of the Southeast Asian Chinese since World War II*, ed. Jennifer W. Cushman and Wang Gungwu (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1988), pp. 289–90.

Also Tong Chee Kiong, "Rethinking Assimilation: The Chinese in Contemporary Thailand", paper presented to the Conference on Luodi-Shenggen: The Legal, Political and Economic Status of Chinese in the Diaspora, 26–29 November 1992, at San Francisco.

to obtain strong assurances that those who chose to stay would settle down and work for the new nation-state. They were prepared to accept that these immigrants or foreigners, as the Chinese were now regarded, who had historically been sojourners needed more time to shake off their sojourning mentality.

The post-war developments in the region have provided us with fresh insights into the nature of migration and sojourning. People who came to trade and stayed on for generations to expand their businesses were never truly migrants, even though objectively it would be correct to describe the act of changing abode as one of migration. In short, before the modern nation-state was conceived, no clear definitions were needed. The matter was largely subjective. If someone left home with every intention to return, that person was sojourning. If another person left and was uncertain or unconcerned about whether to return or not, that act might be described as migrating. What made the difference significant was when the nation-state distinguished between aliens who had permission to sojourn within its borders and potential nationals who had been allowed to immigrate. In a new nation-state, it was particularly important to limit the number of aliens. Therefore, most foreigners had to accept the approved migrant status as a step towards future nationality. The others could remain as sojourners provided they obeyed the laws and especially if they also performed useful functions.

Re-migration

But not all new nation-states grew out of an indigenous population base. Since the late eighteenth century, different kinds of states formed by a variety of colonists, settlers, and migrants had emerged in the Americas and, later, in Australasia. Broadly speaking, the original groups were colonists, among whom some were free settlers, bonded labourers (including slaves), and convicts. Later, the bulk of them became the dominant core groups that carefully invited and supervised new immigrants to people their states. On the whole, preference was given to migrants with a common racial and cultural background. Over time, distinctions of class could also be discerned. The more the migrants came from the labouring classes, the poor, and the dispossessed, the more migration was portrayed by some as helping the desperate and the homeless and by others as exploitation. Refugees from persecution were also allowed entry; students, merchants, and educated professionals, however, were often treated separately because they were more mobile and had greater options whether to stay, return, or move somewhere else. These new nation-states were built on conscious efforts to invite migrants to settle with full citizenship rights shortly after settlement and can be fairly described as migrant states. Their success influenced perceptions of migration in the older nation-states and

led some of them to modify their laws and practices and even their migration policies.

It is too early to say if these modifications will in turn affect the immigration policies of the new states of Southeast Asia. About the time these states achieved independence, the migrant states, especially the United States but later also Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, began to undergo a change of heart towards their migrant peoples. They began to pull back from the racially discriminatory policies that had limited their immigrants largely to those of European stock and slowly opened their doors to people from Asia.¹² Those Chinese and other sojourners of Southeast Asia who had doubts about remaining where they no longer felt welcome—including those who were attracted to intellectual freedom, better quality education, and laws that seemed to protect their ethnic identities, as well as those who looked for greater economic opportunities—began to seek new homes there.

I have described this turning away of sojourners from the indigenous nation-states to the migrant states as re-migration. The receiving countries of North America and Australasia were attracting people who were migrants, or descended from migrants, to move to yet another country rather than return to their ancestral homes. For the Chinese in Southeast Asia, the habit of sojourning made the decision to move again somewhat easier. Indeed, tens of thousands of Chinese, Indian, and European descent from every new nation-state in the region have remigrated; most of them have headed for the migrant states. To call this re-migration is accurate enough; the question, however, is whether those relocating are now truly migrants or whether they have simply carried their sojourning traditions with them.

The globalization of migration

Stage four is, in many ways, merely an extension of the global migration phenomenon of which Chinese and other Southeast Asian sojourning and re-migration are a part. Several key elements underlie this phenomenon; two deserve special attention. The first is the transport and communications revolution of the past half century and the effect this has had on the globalization of commercial and financial linkages. The second is the progress towards a caring and socially just society as manifested in increasing international concern for minorities and refugees and for human rights. I believe these developments require us to re-examine the place of sojourning in migration history.

¹² A fuller discussion of this striking change of policy since the end of World War II is found in "Migration and its Enemies" (note 3 above).

The communications revolution reaching every corner of the globe is indeed a source of wonderment. Air travel, the telephone, not to say fax machines, computers, electronic mail, video cassettes, satellite transmission, and the globalization of the entertainment industry, to take but a few examples, have meant that migrants need not feel cut off from their own roots. The links established between distant places have now actually reinforced the relationships that such migrants had retained from the past and wished to continue to maintain. If these links remained open and accessible, they would support the idea of the right of migrants to multicultural identities. Such rights would have to be clearly defined. They would have at least to be predicated upon assurances of respect for their adopted national institutions and the dominant cultural values of the majority. In return, there would be legal guarantees that protect the respective ethnic identity of each migrant group. These would enable many migrants and migrant communities to keep in close touch with their families, relatives, and countrymen in their previous homes and do business with them. Children may have nationalities different from those of their parents; often families are divided and live in different corners of the globe. In some cases, the excellence of communications facilities with their home bases would allow them to live, behave, think, and feel as if they had never really left. Such a development would further encourage the globalization of the kind of migration found in East and Southeast Asia, sojourning or being temporarily away from home, for generations if necessary.

Further reinforcement is to be found in the rapid expansion in international trade and finance. Businessmen and professional executives operating through multinationals benefit from, and have contributed greatly to, this expansion. An obvious precedent is the merchant-sojourners and their communities and the enterprises founded by the Southeast Asian Chinese and others. Their business organizations have been strengthened by the growth of new managerial and administrative talents who are mobile, willing to re-migrate and practise the art of sojourning whenever called for. Indeed, sojourner networks provide an efficient means to take full advantage of the power and range of the latest technology. The advances in turn enable nation-states to consider how best they could utilize these sojourners and their global agencies.

The changes to the politics of culture in modern nations following the world-wide concern for refugees, minorities, and prisoners of conscience have had a great impact on migrant communities. Many of these communities now feel better protected from discrimination and exploitation. But, more positively, new classes of people educated in a whole range of modern skills are now prepared to migrate or re-migrate and respond to the pull of centres of power and wealth and the new opportunities in international trade and industry. Even more so than the traditional sojourners of Southeast Asia, these people are articulate, politically

sensitive, and choose their new homes carefully. They study the migrant states, especially their laws on the rights of immigrants and the economic conditions awaiting newcomers. They prepare themselves to adapt to local conditions and assure the majority population of their readiness to be loyal to national values. Some go further to monitor the environment for less fortunate migrants and in that way help to build ethnic solidarity. Furthermore, many are masters not only in the handling of official and bureaucratic connections but also in the art of informal linkages.

At one level, this new breed of migrants seems to be creating the conditions that could help to make sojourning respectable again. With the help of local leaders who strongly support minority rights, they have concentrated on presenting themselves and their small communities as non-threatening and essentially adding their talents and experiences to the national stock. Insofar as they are able to persuade national governments of the benefits they bring, local societies are likely to accept that their presence, even as sojourners, would contribute to the prosperity and well-being of the whole nation.

At another level, migration by people with wealth or portable skills of high quality is clearly different from the kinds of labour migration that characterized most of the nineteenth century and the tightly controlled contract workers of the twentieth. When such people are not refugees escaping war or persecution, they would have to be described as a special class of migrant or, given the ease of global communications today, a new type of sojourner. Certainly, circumstances now permit them to behave like the Chinese sojourners of Southeast Asia, only they are better equipped and possibly more adaptable and realistic about their place in both migrant-based and indigenous nation-states.

In conclusion, the Chinese were justified in describing their venture-some residence abroad, however long their visits, as sojourning. Their sojourning communities were well adapted to the conditions of the time and as such contributed significantly to the economic history of the region. They have provided us with a useful conceptual tool for the study of migration history and of global migration today. In view of the changes in the nature of migration, we need to consider whether the concept of migration should include the practice of sojourning or whether sojourning has become the natural first phase of the present world-wide phenomenon of migration.

2

Flows and Seepages in the Long-term Chinese Interaction with Southeast Asia¹

Anthony Reid

In 1991 the first “boat people” arrived in Australia from China, in a memorable saga that took them from Guangdong via the Philippines to the barren Kimberley region of northwest Australia. Their arrival was but one more twist in a very old story—the story of the movement of Chinese out of their homeland into the less crowded islands of opportunity to the south. During most of the last half-century this movement has been a mere trickle, destined primarily for the industrialized countries outside Asia. The flow to Southeast Asia has been virtually stopped since the depression of the 1930s, with more movement in the opposite direction.

It is the curious reversals of the flow southward, periodically running evenly, occasionally gushing, sometimes tightly shut, more often dripping like a leaking tap, that provide the rhythm behind the historical interaction of China and Southeast Asia. Beneath that tap we might envisage the pool of water it feeds, which sometimes looks constant or expanding although in reality seepage is occurring from the pool into the surrounding terrain it helps to fertilize. Only when the tap is shut relatively tightly can one observe the seepage draining the pond altogether.

A long historical perspective on that erratic tap provides a reassuring context for the dramatic changes in China-Southeast Asia relations in the late twentieth century. Southeast Asian cultures have proved adaptable enough to respond creatively and more or less peacefully both to warm relations and to frozen or non-existent ones between the Southeast Asian Chinese and China.

¹ I wish to acknowledge the assistance of Li Tana, who translated most Chinese references for me, Mo Yimei, who translated Zhang Xie (n. 85), and Bill Jenner, Craig Reynolds, Nola Cooke and the late W.H. Scott.



Map 2. Eastern and Western routes of Chinese trade to Southeast Asia

The early Mongol spurt

The process of interaction between immigrants from China and local elites in Southeast Asia began long before recorded history. The language families that have dominated Southeast Asia during the last thousand years—Austronesian, Tai, and Burman—themselves appear to have originated in what is now Chinese territory. During the first millennium of the Common Era, when Chinese were not yet great seafarers, Vietnamese civilization was refashioned by the expansion there of an elite that wrote in Chinese.

It is the movement by sea to which I want to draw attention, however. As a continuous flow that movement began with the Southern Song, and the first recorded gush was that of the Mongols in the 1280s and 1290s. As world-conquerors the Mongols' view of their proper relations with Southeast Asia was quite different from the aim of evoking admiration for Chinese virtue (*te*) that Wang Gungwu has shown to be at the heart of Tang and Song ideology.² Where possible the Mongols would send armies and fleets to compel submission and impose a Mongol governor, taxes, and military corvée.

Kublai Khan's unprecedented series of interventions in Southeast Asia all failed to achieve his object of permanent submission. Nevertheless, they had incalculable side effects. The established "classic" empires of Pagan, Angkor, Champa, and Java all fared badly at Mongol hands and were thereby hastened to their demise. Their decline cleared a path for a series of Tai kingdoms to emerge in Mainland Southeast Asia. The earliest of these, at Sukhothai, appeared to have good relations with China, with a steady flow of missions in both directions in the period 1296–1323.

Kublai Khan sent a force of twenty thousand soldiers to Java in 1293 with the aim of punishing King Kertanegara for his insolence, according to the Yuan dynastic history.³ The consequences were profound though not intended. Kertanegara's son-in-law, Wijaya, was able to manipulate the Chinese troops to his own advantage and then harry them out of Java, leaving him on the throne. Thousands of Chinese soldiers reportedly died in Java, and many must have been captured by the Javanese or remained voluntarily among them rather than face the rigours of a return journey. This episode not only marked the rise of the new dynasty of Majapahit, but also brought a major injection of Chinese technology to Java, notably in shipbuilding techniques and coinage.

² Wang Gungwu, *Community and Nation: Essays on Southeast Asia and the Chinese* (Singapore: Heineman, 1981), pp. 28–43.

³ W.P. Groeneveldt, "Notes on the Malay Archipelago and Malacca compiled from Chinese Sources", *Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap* 39 (1880), pp. 21–27.

The word "junk" to denote an East Asian trading vessel came into European languages from the reports of travellers as early as the fourteenth century, though far more frequently in the sixteenth. It was borrowed not from Chinese but from the Javanese and Malay word *jong*.⁴ European descriptions and the excavation of a dozen ships of the thirteenth to seventeenth centuries involved in the China–Southeast Asia trade show these junks were large cargo vessels of 500 to 600 tonnes, with the hold divided into variable partitions and the hulls able to have extra planks fastened to them as they grew unseaworthy. Pierre-Yves Manguin has pointed out that they shared characteristics with two types previously regarded as distinctively "Chinese" and "Southeast Asian", as one might expect of ships built by Indonesian carpenters on Chinese or partly Chinese models.⁵ A Javanese *kidung* (poem) confirms that at least one type of Javanese junk was influenced by the Chinese invaders during "the war of King Wijaya".⁶

Not only in Java did the Mongol fleet affect shipbuilding. Wang Dayuan wrote about the experience of remnants of the fleet at Goulan Shan, which Rockhill identified as the small island of Gelam off southwestern Borneo:

When the [Yuan] dynasty was founded, the forces to attack Java were driven by the wind to this island, and the ships wrecked. One ship fortunately escaped with stores of nails and mortar. Seeing that there was a great deal of timber on this island, they built some tens of ships, everything from ribs to sails and bamboo poles were supplied [from the island]. Over a hundred men who were ill from the long beating about in the storm and were unable to leave were left on the island, and today the Chinese live mixed up with the native families.⁷

The introduction of Chinese copper *cash* as the base coinage of Java

⁴ It has been argued that this in turn derived from a Chinese word, *chuan* (or, in Fujian dialect, *song*), although this must be treated cautiously since *jong* is one of the older known Javanese words, occurring in literature of the Kadiri period (1049–1222) and in an inscription of the ninth century—see P.J. Zoetmulder, *Old Javanese–English Dictionary* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1982), p. 748 (which reference I owe to Helen Creese), and Pierre-Yves Manguin, "Late Mediaeval Shipbuilding in the Indian Ocean: A Reappraisal", *Moyen Orient et Océan Indien* 2: 2 (1985), p. 24.

⁵ Pierre-Yves Manguin, "Relationship and Cross-Influences between Southeast Asian and Chinese Shipbuilding Traditions", *Final Report, SPAFA Consultative Workshop on Maritime Shipping and Trade Networks in Southeast Asia* (Bangkok: SEAMEO Special Project on Archeology and Fine Art, 1984), pp. 197–212; also Manguin, "Late Mediaeval Shipbuilding".

⁶ Anthony Reid, "The Rise and Fall of Sino-Javanese Shipping" in *Looking in Odd Mirrors: The Java Sea*, ed. V.J. H. Houben, H.M.J. Maier and W. van der Molen (Leiden: Vakgroep Talen en Culturen van Zuidoost-Azië en Oceanië, 1992), p. 181.

⁷ Translated in W.W. Rockhill, "Notes on the Relations and Trade of China with the Eastern Archipelago and the Coast of the Indian Ocean during the Fourteenth Century", *T'oung pao* 16 (1915), p. 261.

瓜哇國



Figure 1. Javanese, perhaps represented betting on frogs, in the illustrated Encyclopaedia *Sancai Tuhai* of 1609. Thomas O. Hollman, "Wo der Himmel endet: Vom Umgang mit fremde Landern, Volkern und Kulteren im chinesischn Kaiserreich," reproduced in *Focus Behaim Globus* (Nuremberg: Germanisches Nationalmuseum)

appears to have been another result of the Mongol intervention. Writing in 1349, Wang Dayuan claimed that the use of Chinese *cash* was one of the demands made by the Mongol expedition, and that in his day they were exchanged routinely with native coins.⁸ From about 1300, Javanese inscriptions tend to express values in *picis* (Chinese copper *cash*) rather than in the denomination of the older native coins. One copperplate of 1350 quotes the testimony of the owner of some contested land that his great-great-grandfather had bought it for silver, "at the time that this land of Java did not possess the means of the *picis*".⁹ The Chinese *cash* appears also to have spread to other parts of the Indonesian Archipelago including Maluku (the Spice Islands) about this time, but the dating and causation of this spread are most clear in the case of Java.

The Chinese or Sino-Indonesian communities left behind by the Mongol invasion may have played a longer term role in stimulating commerce. Both a mid-fourteenth-century Chinese writer¹⁰ and Portuguese descriptions of the early 1500s assert that Chinese traders were the first to visit Ternate and Tidore, in northern Maluku, to buy the cloves that those islands alone produced. Barros held that the Malukans had lived like savages until Chinese junks began to arrive to buy their cloves, providing in exchange the Chinese *cash* that became their major currency. Eventually "the Javanese also responded to the commerce, and the Chinese stopped coming".¹¹ Other Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch sources report similar stories circulating among the Ternatans.¹² Galvão, one of the earliest and most careful of these, concedes that the Ternatans differed as to whether the first junks arriving for cloves were Chinese, Malay, or Javanese, though they agreed that they came from the northwest, by the "Borneo route" known to the Portuguese. "Most of them incline towards the view that it was the Chinese, and that seems to be the truth."¹³

⁸ Rockhill, "Notes", p. 237.

⁹ J.Th. Pigeaud, *Java in the Fourteenth Century* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1960-63), Vol. 3, p. 154. R.S. Wicks, *Money, Markets and Trade in Early Southeast Asia: The Development of Indigenous Monetary Systems to AD 1400* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1992), p. 291.

¹⁰ Wang Dayuan, translated in Rockhill, "Notes", pp. 259-60.

¹¹ João de Barros, *Da Asia* [1563], 4 decades in 9 vols. (Lisbon: Regia Officina, 1777. Reprint, Lisbon: Livraria Sam Carlos, 1973), Dec. 3, Livro 1, pp. 576-79.

¹² Leonardo Argensola, *The Discovery and Conquest of the Molucco and Philippine Islands* (London, 1708. Reprint, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1982), pp. 8, 36. J. Keuning, ed., *De tweede schipvaart der Nederlanders naar Oost-Indië onder Jacob Cornelisz van Neck en Wybrant Warwijck, 1598-1600*, Vol. 2 (The Hague: Nijhoff for Linschoten-Vereeniging, 1942), p. 133.

¹³ Galvão, Antonio, *A Treatise on the Moluccas (c. 1544), Probably the Preliminary Version of Antonio Galvão's Lost História das Molucas*, trans. Hubert Jacobs, SJ (Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute, 1971), p. 79. See further in Reid, "Sino-Japanese Shipping", pp. 182-84.

These "Chinese" traders must have given way to "Javanese" on the spice route by 1400, since the Chinese accounts derived from the Zheng He (Cheng Ho) voyages make no mention of Maluku. Under the power of the Majapahit chancellor, Gajah Mada (1331–51), Java pursued an expansionist policy eastward along the spice route all the way to Maluku, if the *Nagarakertagama*'s list of tributaries can be believed.¹⁴ Around the middle of the fourteenth century the pioneering Chinese traders in Maluku appear to have been replaced by predominantly Muslim Javanese. Presumably it was at this time that a southern Chinese word for the clove "nail" was adopted into Malay and Javanese as *cengkeh*.¹⁵

The Chinese traders may well have been driven out of the Maluku clove trade, as the European sources imply. A broader consideration of the likely reasons for the success of Majapahit in dominating the Java Sea in the middle of the fourteenth century suggests another explanation, however. Java's rapid rise as a maritime power almost certainly relied on incorporating under Majapahit hegemony the seamen, pilots, and shipowners who already plied these routes. Predominant among these were Chinese-descended sailors and traders who had made local bases in the Archipelago, and Muslim merchants spreading eastward from their centres in Pasai (northern Sumatra) and eastern Java. "Chinese" merchants may no longer have been reported as making the voyage between Java and Maluku because they ceased to be identified as such. The confusion of Ternatans as to whether the early traders were Chinese, Malays, or Javanese was probably justified.¹⁶ The Chinese may have blended with the Muslim or Hindu-Javanese traders of the northeast coast of Java, or have become minor actors in the larger fleets that Gajah Mada put together to dominate the east. The categories "Chinese", "Javanese", and "Muslim" should not be seen as mutually exclusive at a time when links with the Chinese and Islamic heartlands were tenuous in the extreme.

The early Ming gush

After the spurt of the late thirteenth century the Chinese "tap" had continued to trickle. Frustrated in their politico-military objectives, the Mongols had shown little interest in private commercial activity, which had therefore managed to continue until the end of the dynasty in 1368. The early Ming

¹⁴ Pigeaud, *Java*, Vol. 3, p. 17.

¹⁵ E.D. Edwards and C.O. Blagden, "A Chinese Vocabulary of Malacca Malay Words and Phrases Collected between A.D. 1403 and 1511(?)", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 6: 3 (1931), p. 725; Antonio Pigafetta, *First Voyage Around the World* [1524], trans. J.A. Robertson (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, 1969), pp. 72, 83. *Zhen ga* means "nail" in the dialects of Xiamen and Guangzhou, cf. Mandarin *zhi jia*.

¹⁶ But note that Palembang received a new spurt of Chinese immigration within a generation of its conquest by Majapahit, so that the Chinese community there remained distinct.

emperors were by contrast determined to suppress private trade. They sought instead correct relationships of tribute and were prepared to launch an astonishing series of diplomatic initiatives, frequently backed by force, to establish that relationship. These initiatives presented great opportunities to Southeast Asian rulers willing to accept the undoubted risks involved.

The diplomatic initiatives taken by the Yongle [Yung-lo] emperor (1403–24) during the first half of his reign were altogether exceptional in Chinese history. In total nine Chinese imperial missions went to Champa, eight to Siam, six each to Melaka and Samudra-Pasai, and ten to Java in the first eleven years of the Yongle reign. Each let it be known that missions of tribute to the imperial court would be welcomed and rewarded with trade goods. For this emperor the ambition “to protect the weak and deter the greedy” in Southeast Asia was not just rhetoric but a claim to effective suzerainty over the whole region. In 1406 he sent a large force to Vietnam to punish the new dynasty there for twenty explicit misdemeanours.¹⁷ His stern letter of 1407 to the “western king”¹⁸ of Java, whose men had killed 170 Chinese members of a mission to the weaker “eastern king”, is indicative of his mentality. If compensation were not immediately forthcoming, the emperor wrote, “we cannot stop our armies from going to punish you. The warning example of Annam is there”.¹⁹

The port-states that most successfully exploited the opportunities offered by the new Chinese dynasty were Ayutthaya, Melaka, and Brunei. By their alacrity in sending tribute missions that included royalty, these states obtained protection from more powerful neighbours. Above all they became the key Southeast Asian entrepôts collecting tropical goods for dispatch to China and selling Chinese manufactures to traders from the region. Charnvit Kasetsiri has shown that Uthong, the founder of Ayutthaya according to Thai chronicle traditions, was certainly a merchant “outsider”, probably from a Chinese background, and possibly a first-generation Chinese as suggested by Jeremias van Vliet’s informants.²⁰ The first Ming mission, in 1370, recognized the new port-state as the Xianlo (Siam) known to the Mongols, and the rulers of Ayutthaya responded with gratitude

¹⁷ Wang, *Community and Nation*, pp. 63–64.

¹⁸ The “western” and “eastern” kings were both members of the Majapahit court in east Java. Toru Aoyama, “A New Interpretation of the East-West Division of Majapahit in the Late Fourteenth Century”, *Tonan Ajia: Rekisha to Bunka* 21 (1992), pp. 84–87, has argued convincingly that the Chinese were confused by the fact that separate envoys came from rival eastern and western compounds of the Majapahit court.

¹⁹ Yongle Shi Lu, translated in Wang, *Community and Nation*, p. 72.

²⁰ Charnvit Kasetsiri, *The Rise of Ayudhya. A History of Siam in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Kuala Lumpur: OUP 1976), pp. 66–72; Jeremias van Vliet, “Description of the Kingdom of Siam” [1636], trans. L.F. van Ravenswaay, *JSS* 7: 1 (1910), pp. 6–8.

and alacrity. In response to fifteen missions the first three Ming emperors sent to Ayutthaya in the period 1371–1429, they responded with sixty-one, or more than one each year.²¹ The only Archipelago state to come near this record was (east) Java with forty-two missions in the same period, mostly concentrated after 1403.²²

The Ming dynastic histories make clear that Melaka, Brunei, and the maritime chiefdoms of the Philippines were even more eager to exploit the opportunity offered by the early Ming “gush” of diplomacy. Brunei made itself exceptional in Chinese eyes not by its political or economic importance but because its king was evidently the first southern ruler to journey personally to China, taking his family to pay homage to the emperor in 1408. Yongle was sufficiently flattered by a gesture he saw as “unique in history” to write a personal poem and inscription praising the king’s loyalty. This king, “Manara Kananai”, died a few weeks after his splendid reception in Nanjing. His young son was recognized as king and sent home in the company of a Chinese commissioner, Zhang Qian, who reportedly acted as regent of Brunei for several years. The new king came again to present his personal homage to the emperor in 1412.²³ Brunei traditions were still strong, in the sixteenth century, about a king who went to China and became the founder of Brunei’s prosperity. These traditions, however, conflate father and son into one king and add that he was given a Chinese princess to wife, from whose progeny subsequent kings descended.²⁴ Many other legends in northern Borneo refer to a local Chinese ruler, variously known as Ong Sum Ping, or the ruler of the “Chinese River” (Kinabatangan), whose marriage with a Brunei princess is claimed by many of the indigenous Dusuns of North Borneo (Sabah) to be the origin of their people. Brunei chronicles, by contrast, portray the daughter of this Chinese marrying the founder of the Brunei sultanate.²⁵

²¹ Suebsang Promboon, “Sino-Siamese Tributary Relations 1282–1853” (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1971), pp. 106–20.

²² Pin-Tsun Chang, “The First Chinese Diaspora in Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century” in *Emporia, Commodities and Entrepreneurs in Asian Maritime Trade, c. 1400–1750*, ed. Roderich Ptak and Dietmar Rothermund (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1991), p. 28; also Reid, “Sino-Javanese Shipping”, pp. 208–11; Wang, *Community and Nation*, pp. 70–78.

²³ Wang Gungwu, *Community and Nation*, pp. 68, 78. W.H. Scott, *Prehistoric Source Materials for the Study of Philippine History* (Quezon City: New Day, 1984), p. 77.

²⁴ J.S. Carroll, “Berunei in the Boxer Codex” [1590], *JMBRAS* 55: 2 (1982), pp. 4–5.

²⁵ Owen Rutter, *The Pagans of North Borneo* (London: Hutchinson, 1929), pp. 40–45; Amin Sweeney, “Silsilah Raja-raja Berunei”, *JMBRAS* 41: 2 (1968), p. 103; H.R. Hughes-Hallett, “A Sketch of the History of Brunei”, *JMBRAS* 28: 2 (1940), pp. 24–26. These various Borneo traditions have been recently reviewed by Tan Pek Lang, “A History of Chinese Settlement in Brunei” in *Essays on Modern Brunei History* (Brunei: Universiti Brunei Darussalam, 1992), pp. 101–8.



Figure 2. Stone guardian lining the approach to the fifteenth century tomb of the King of Brunei, near Nanjing, China. Zhenghe Shiji Wenwu Xuan (Beijing, Ren Min Jiao Tong Chu Ban She, 1985)

Brunei was by no means alone in incorporating a "Chinese princess" (*puteri Cina*) into the story of its rise to glory in a period corresponding to the early fifteenth century. The Javanese "great babad" tradition ascribes the origin of the Muslim rulers of Java to Raden Patah, son of the last Hindu ruler of Majapahit, Brawijaya, by a Chinese princess.²⁶ The Malay Annals also contain a story of a daughter of the Chinese emperor, sent to marry Sultan Mansur of Melaka accompanied by a retinue of five hundred high-born youths and hundreds of beautiful women in response to a Malay mission to the Chinese capital.²⁷ The great Bugis pre-Islamic epic, *I La Galigo*, is largely concerned with the journeys of the national hero, Sawerigading, from Luwu to "China" to marry its princess, I We Chudai.²⁸ Although it is of course implausible that the Chinese emperor would have sent his daughters overseas, these stories probably represent an acceptable way of explaining an infusion of Chinese blood, wealth and technology into the ruling dynasties in the early fifteenth century.

Since the Brunei dynasty received such obvious material benefits from its mission to China, it was not surprising that other Malay rulers chose to make their obeisance in person. Rulers of Melaka did so in 1411, 1414, 1419, and 1423, and of Sulu in 1417. As has been well shown by Wang Gungwu and others, Melaka's rise in the period 1403–14 was inextricably tied to its relationship with the Yongle emperor and his energetic state diplomacy. If Melaka was a minor coastal town when the Chinese discovered it, the places collectively rendered as Sulu were even more obscure. The royal tribute mission from Sulu was recorded in Beijing as including three "kings" with Sanskrit titles but kingdoms difficult to identify. The Chinese labelled them the "east king", the "west king", and the "cave king". The most senior of them, Paduka Batara, died in Dezhou (Shandong) on 23 October 1417 and was elaborately buried there as a reward for his "praiseworthy spirit of loyal obedience".²⁹ Although the rest of the large mission of over 340 people was sent back in style to the Sulu area, his two sons and their immediate families remained in China, where they

²⁶ *Babad Tanah Djawi. Javaanse Rijkskroniek*, trans. W.L. Olthof, ed. J.J. Ras (Dordrecht: Foris for KITLV, 1987), pp. 20–22.

²⁷ "Sejarah Melayu or 'Malay Annals'", trans. C.C. Brown, *JMBRAS* 25: 2 & 3 (1952), pp. 90–91.

²⁸ R.A. Kern, *Catalogus van de Boegineesche, tot den I La Galigo-cyclus behoorende Handschriften der Leidsche Universiteitsbibliotheek* (Leiden: Universiteitsbibliotheek, 1939), pp. 285–343. Although Ian Caldwell "South Sulawesi A.D. 1300–1600: Ten Bugis Texts" (PhD dissertation, Australian National University, 1988), pp. 207–11, has shown that there probably was a small kingdom of Cina (China) before 1400 near the mouth of the Cenrana River in South Sulawesi, the stories must, in my view, owe part of their force to the Ming empire's importance in the consciousness of maritime Southeast Asians of that period.

²⁹ Dezhou gazeteer quoted in W.H. Scott, *Filipinos in China before 1500* (Manila: De La Salle University China Studies Program, 1989), p. 9.

associated with the local Chinese Muslim population (perhaps Malay-speakers, as suggested by Scott) and converted to Islam, as was noted in gazeteers three centuries later.³⁰ For the ensuing decade imperial relations with Sulu were close, with at least four more tribute missions. One of them, in 1420, became especially celebrated by offering the emperor the largest pearl that had ever been seen.

More southern Philippine chieftains benefited from the emperor's apparent fascination with their affairs. The same mandarin who had helped administer Brunei for three years was sent with a fleet soon after the Sulu king's death to discipline a chief in Kumalalang, identified by Scott with the Zamboanga area. He appears to have remained there for two years and returned to the court in 1420 with a suitably submissive king in tow, who in turn died and was handsomely buried in Fujian.³¹

One could go on to describe more of these extraordinary relations between the world's most powerful ruler on the one hand and coastal chieftains on the other who were just beginning to see how to turn their territories into states. In October 1405 alone the Yongle court sent envoys to Fansur (Barus), Lambri and Minangkabau in Sumatra, and to Belitung, Luzon and Sulu—none of them substantial states.³² The important point for my purpose is that the number of Chinese who found themselves in the *Nanyang*, as well as the opportunities for them to become indispensable to rising rulers by arranging their affairs with the Chinese court, increased dramatically as a consequence of the intense early Ming activity. The seventy Chinese missions sent to Southeast Asian rulers during the Yongle reign evoked twice as many tribute missions in return.³³

For Java and Sumatra there is clear evidence of strong Chinese commercial communities in the early fifteenth century. Many Chinese appear to have taken up residence in Southeast Asia at about the beginning of the Ming dynasty in 1368, perhaps because the absolute Ming ban on private trade prevented them returning home without fear of punishment. Chinese also defected from the Zheng He fleets in considerable numbers, adding to the strength of these communities. One ship of the last such fleet, in 1431–33, is reported to have returned home with only three of its three hundred soldiers.³⁴ Ma Huan, the Muslim chronicler of Zheng He's voyages, is the major source on the Chinese trading communities of Palembang and eastern Java, which he portrayed as prosperous and

³⁰ Scott, *Prehistoric Source Materials*, pp. 75–77; Scott, *Filipinos in China*, pp. 7–10.

³¹ Scott, *Prehistoric Source Materials*, p. 77.

³² Wang, *Community and Nation*, p. 90.

³³ Wang, *Community and Nation*, pp. 70–74.

³⁴ *Ming Shi Lu Chong Zhi Dong Nan Ya Shi Liao* (Southeast Asia in Ming Dynastic Chronicles), ed. Zhao Ling Yang et al., 2 vols. (Hong Kong: Hsuehsin Press, 1968), Vol. 2, p. 379. Chang, "The First Chinese Diaspora", pp. 25–26.

powerful, with Cantonese migrants ruling the port-cities of Gresik and Palembang in this period.³⁵

Southeast Asian traditions commemorate the legacy of the Zheng He voyages in various ways. Some local Chinese communities honour Zheng He ("Sampokong" in Java, "San-pao Kung" in Siam) as their founding patriarch. Javanese traditions tend to personalize the Chinese role in stories of a few prominent Chinese figures intervening to help found the eventually Muslim port-states of the Javanese north coast. In Demak it was Ko Po, "a man from Mongol China, who came with three ships" and may have become Muslim in the existing Muslim port community of Gresik.³⁶ In Japara it was the shipwrecked Chinese merchant Wintang, who married the then princess of Demak and eventual queen of Japara.³⁷

Sino-Southeast Asian diplomats and traders

This period of intense interaction with imperial fleets and envoys must have placed Chinese in key positions in Southeast Asian trade and statecraft. Embassies to China were made possible by ethnic Chinese or Sino-Southeast Asians domiciled in the southern capitals. Geoff Wade has listed fifty-three prominent members of fifteenth-century Southeast Asian tribute missions who bore Chinese names. These were particularly numerous in Java, where about half the envoys bore Chinese names; in Siam, however, Chinese appear to have given way to Thai emissaries after the 1420s.³⁸ Many of those with Chinese surnames had Southeast Asian personal names as well as titles, indicating that a process of localization was under way. Others whose names were not recorded as Chinese turn out from the record to have been born in Fujian. The emissary from Majapahit in 1436, for example, was named Kaifu Patih Manrong but "said that his name used to be Hong Maozai and he used to live in Longxi county of Fujian".³⁹

³⁵ Ma Huan, *Ying-yai Sheng-lan: "The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores"*, ed. J.V.G. Mills (Cambridge: Hakluyt Society, 1970), pp. 89–90, 98–99.

³⁶ Jan Edel, *Hikajat Hasanoeddin* (Meppel: Published Utrecht Dissertation, 1938), p. 122. H.J. De Graaf and Th.G.Th. Pigeaud, *De eerste Moslimse vorstendommen op Java* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1974), pp. 34–39. R.H. Djajadiningrat, *Critische beschouwingen van de Sadjarah Banten* (Haarlem: Joh. Enschede, 1913), p. 21.

³⁷ Th.G. Pigeaud, *The Literature of Java*, Vol. 2 (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1968), p. 363; De Graaf and Pigeaud, *Moslimse vorstendommen*, p. 104.

³⁸ Geoff Wade, "The 'Ming Shi-lu' as a Source for Southeast Asian History—14th to 17th Centuries", Paper presented at the 12th Conference of the International Association of Historians of Asia, Hong Kong, 1991, pp. 116–17. See also Reid, "Sino-Javanese Shipping", pp. 208–11.

³⁹ *Ming Shi Lu*, Vol. 2, p. 347. Also Wade, "The 'Ming Shi-lu'", p. 117.

Since interpreters (often bearing Chinese names) were included in many missions to translate from Thai, Malay, Khmer, or Javanese, there must also have been indigenous Southeast Asian aristocrats who did not speak Chinese among the envoys travelling to China. We should credit this lively diplomatic and commercial "tributary" trade to the combined efforts of the cosmopolitan port communities of fifteenth-century Southeast Asia, in which locally domiciled Chinese, Southeast Asian, and Sino-Southeast Asian elites and seamen all played their part. It was at its peak in the period 1400–1449, when an average of nearly four seaborne missions each year were sent to the Chinese capital by Southeast Asian rulers (Java and Champa each sending one almost every year).⁴⁰

The unprecedented state trading expeditions of the Yongle reign caused a jump in the demand for Southeast Asian products in China. T'ien Ju-kang⁴¹ has shown that the leading products of the *Nanyang* trade—pepper and sappanwood—became for the first time items of mass consumption in China in the fifteenth century, and so abounded in government warehouses that they were used in part-payment of hundreds of thousands of Chinese officials and soldiers. In Southeast Asia, the Zheng He fleets stimulated the production of pepper, clove, nutmeg, and sappanwood, and the distribution networks that brought these items to the major entrepôts and took cloth, rice, and manufactured goods in exchange to the production centres. The Zheng He expeditions should be taken as the starting point of Southeast Asia's "age of commerce".⁴² When the imperial fleets stopped coming, the products required in China had to be carried there in other ways. Tribute missions from the south, partly manned by Chinese, provided the principal means to do this as long as they were encouraged by the Ming court.

The diplomatic and commercial roles of Sino-Southeast Asian cultural brokers were not limited to such missions, however. Some had particularly colourful careers, which included establishing the first known diplomatic contacts between Southeast and Northeast Asia—perhaps as a means to circumvent the Ming ban on direct private trade to China. Korean records help us identify one envoy of Siam, Nai Goung, who left Ayutthaya in 1388, travelled to Japan, where he stayed for about a year, and reached Korea in 1391. Another, Nai Chang Ssu-tao, brought greetings from Siam

⁴⁰ This calculation (193 missions in 50 years) is based on Table 1 in Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450–1680*, Vol. 2 (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 16. Compare the slightly different figures (excluding Philippines and Borneo) in Chang, "The First Chinese Diaspora", p. 28.

⁴¹ T'ien Ju-kang, "Chêng Ho's Voyages and the Distribution of Pepper in China", *JRAS* 2 (1981), pp. 186–97.

⁴² See my "An 'Age of Commerce' in Southeast Asian History", *MAS* 24: 1 (1990), pp. 1–30, and *Age of Commerce*, Vol. 2, pp. 10–16.

to Korea in 1394 and returned home with Korean envoys, after an initial attempt to leave Korea was thwarted by Japanese pirates.⁴³

Chen Yen-xiang was a member of this same diplomatic mission of 1394 from Siam to Korea. When he reappeared in Korean records in 1406, however, it was as an envoy from Java. This time his ship was attacked by Japanese pirates at Kunsan Island off the Korean coast. Most of the Javanese ship's crew were killed or captured by the Japanese, but Chen was able to make his way to the Korean court with forty survivors. There he was treated well and provided with a small vessel for the return journey to Java. However, he was again wrecked on the coast of Japan and robbed of everything—at least according to the story he later told. The Japanese *bakufu* now rescued the resourceful diplomat and provided him with a ship with which he did successfully get back to Java. Despite all the difficulties, Chen's success in bringing letters from these distant kings, and probably valuable gifts and trade goods as well, must have awakened in the Majapahit court the desire to pursue the relationship. The Javanese kingdom sent Chen back to Japan with the highest title of Javanese envoys, *Arya* (recorded in Chinese as *Alie*). After further setbacks his ship reached the Japanese port of Hakata in the seventh month of 1412. From there Chen wrote the letter to the Korean court from which most of this information is drawn, expressing his gratitude for Korea's help during his previous troubles. The envoy explained that he was obliged to go first to the Japanese court in Kyoto, but was sending his grandson to Korea to convey the greetings of Java.⁴⁴

A few other Chinese or Sino-Southeast Asian envoys from the southern kingdoms to Nanjing or Beijing emerge as individual personalities in the pages of the Ming chronicle, *Ming Shi Lu*. One who made many such visits was the Majapahit envoy, Ma Yong-liang, who initially carried the Javanese title *Patih*. In 1436, and on five subsequent missions up to 1453, he carried the highest Javanese title of *Arya*. On his 1438 visit Ma admitted that he was a native of Longxi in Fujian and was allowed to revisit his native district and build a hall there to honour his ancestors. The fiction was politely accepted that he had been blown off course to Java on a fishing trip, rather than having traded privately with the *Nanyang* in defiance of imperial bans.⁴⁵

Though honoured with a silver and a gold belt, Ma also found himself in trouble with the Chinese authorities on account of his involvement with an enterprising rascal called Naiai—perhaps a Sino-Thai. In 1444 Naiai

⁴³ Atsushi Kobata and Mitsugo Matsuda, *Ryukyuan Relations with Korea and South Sea Countries* (Kyoto: Atsushi Kobata, 1969), p. 53.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 149–50. Also Reid, "Sino-Japanese Shipping", pp. 187–88.

⁴⁵ *Ming Shi Lu*, Vol. 2, pp. 346, 352, 377, 387; see also Kobata and Matsuda, *Ryukyuan Relations*, pp. 152–53; Reid, "Sino-Japanese Shipping", p. 188.

had been the interpreter of the Siamese tribute mission, but had stolen some of the royal tribute goods, and absconded to Java with Ma's mission from Majapahit. After a complaint from the Siamese envoy, both men were arrested in Guangdong on their next tribute mission to China. Both evidently landed on their feet, however, and Naiai appeared again in the dynastic records in 1456 as an envoy of Melaka, accused of embezzling pearls from its tribute mission. He ended by taking his own life as a result of a liaison with a Chinese woman in Guangdong.⁴⁶

Another role played by the Southeast Asian Chinese was in maintaining a lively indirect commerce with China and Japan through the Ryukyu (Okinawa) kingdom—most intensively in the latter two-thirds of the fifteenth century. Ryukyu became a major entrepôt between Northeast and Southeast Asia by using its tributary relations with China to circumvent the Ming ban on private trade. The Ryukyu records preserved in the *Rekidai Hoan* indicate that the earliest contacts between Ryukyu and Southeast Asia were with Siam, and after that with the Chinese community of Palembang. The latter group, then governed by a Ming-appointed "pacification commissioner", had initiated the contact by sending a ship to Japan in 1419, under a captain with a Chinese name but the Malayo-Persian title *Nakhoda*. After long delays and misadventures in Kyushu, the crew was sent home by way of Ryukyu and Siam in 1421. This initial contact appears to have stimulated Ryukyu to open commercial relations with Palembang in 1428 and with (eastern) Java in 1430.⁴⁷ Siam and Melaka for their part had a particularly extensive trade with Ryukyu in the period 1430–81, each receiving more than one ship from Ryukyu every year during the periods for which records have survived. Sino-Southeast Asian merchants probably managed the reception of Ryukyuan vessels and the accompanying correspondence in Chinese. For them it was an alternative way to trade with China as the tributary connection weakened. Palembang had probably led the way because it was forbidden direct contact with China.

Six trade missions from Ryukyu to Java were recorded in the period 1430–42. Although the records of the subsequent two decades are missing, the direct relationship with Java, as with Palembang, probably ended in the 1440s. By 1463, when records in the *Rekidai Hoan* are again available, Ryukyu trade had shifted sharply to Melaka, which became the entrepôt for Northeast Asians trading with the Archipelago until its fall to the Portuguese in 1511. The Portuguese reported that one, two, or three Ryukyu junks had been reaching Melaka each year.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ *Ming Shi Lu*, Vol. 2, p. 390.

⁴⁷ Kobata and Matsuda, *Ryukyuan Relations*, pp. 131–35.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 131–63; *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*, trans. Armando Cortesão (London: Hakluyt Society, 1944), p. 130.

The tap closed: isolation and assimilation

From the time the Yongle emperor left Nanjing to campaign against the Mongols in the north, in 1417, the sense of purpose went out of the extraordinary Ming policy of interventions in Southeast Asia. The rebellion that finally drove the Chinese out of Vietnam in 1428 was one discouraging factor, and threats to the Ming from the traditional quarter, the north and northwest, was the other. The capital was permanently shifted to Beijing in 1421. Ming policy thereafter moved first to passivity and then to isolation and lack of interest. Bans on private trade, with increasingly drastic penalties, were repeated in 1433, 1449, and 1452.⁴⁹

Tribute missions continued, since this was the only legal channel by which trade could be conducted and Chinese emigrants could return home, but Beijing's interest was clearly waning in the middle of the century. In 1443 the emperor requested the king of Java to send tribute no more than once in three years, as a result of a memorial from Guangdong complaining that the frequent missions from Java caused "great expense to China".⁵⁰ In 1449 it was decided that officials from Beijing should no longer bother to accompany southern envoys on their return journey to Guangdong. In 1453 the emperor again wrote to the king of Java urging him to send fewer people less often.⁵¹ Thereafter only Champa and Siam maintained any regularity of contact, and the average number of missions to China dropped to only one per year from the whole of Southeast Asia in the half-century after 1460.⁵²

The demand for trade goods which had been stimulated in both China and Southeast Asia by the state trading expeditions of the early part of the century now had to be met indirectly (notably through Ryukyu) or surreptitiously. At least on the coastal route of the "western seas" (down the Indochina coast), Chinese shippers defied imperial bans to keep the lucrative trade flowing. In 1444 it was reported from Guangdong province that fifty-five men had shipped out illegally the previous year and that twenty-two had remained in Java while the remainder came back. The following year an imperial censor impeached the local authorities in Fujian for having allowed some traders of the Luhai district to sail to Java posing as imperial envoys.⁵³

In the second half of the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth, when direct contacts between Southeast Asia and China were

⁴⁹ Wang Gungwu, *Community and Nation*, pp. 70–74; Mark Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973), p. 218.

⁵⁰ *Ming Shi Lu*, Vol. 2, p. 366; see also Reid, "Sino-Javanese Shipping", p. 193.

⁵¹ *Ming Shi Lu*, Vol. 2, p. 387.

⁵² See note 40. Also Reid, "Sino-Javanese Shipping", p. 194.

⁵³ Kobata and Matsuda, *Ryukyuan Relations*, p. 162.

markedly reduced, the ever-present tendency for assimilation of Chinese into the cosmopolitan populations of the Southeast Asian port-capitals was at its height. In Siam it was noted that "The Chinese at first retain their own surnames, but give them up after a few generations", thereby adopting Thai identities.⁵⁴ Assimilation was particularly prevalent in Island Southeast Asia, where it appears that direct contacts with China became minimal, most trade went through Melaka or other ports, and the resident Sino-Southeast Asian populations ceased to be regarded as Chinese at all. The trading class of Java's north coast and of the Manila area was regarded simply as "Javanese" and "Luzons" respectively by Portuguese observers, with no mention of Chinese as a separate group.

Following the entry for November 1427 in the *Ming Shi Lu*, describing the return of a Chinese envoy from Sulu, there is no subsequent evidence of direct contact between China and the Philippines or Borneo until Pires' statement that the Chinese had begun sailing to Brunei direct in about 1500.⁵⁵ Neither the early Portuguese reports nor the account of Magellan's expedition in 1521 made any mention of Chinese trade in Brunei or the Philippines.⁵⁶ It seems probable, therefore, that the "eastern" route to the south from Fujian ports by way of the western coasts of Taiwan and Luzon was abandoned in the middle of the fifteenth century. Two reasons might explain why this route suffered more than the "western" route. Firstly, it must have been easier for the merchants of Fujian and Guangdong to operate to nearby ports on the Southeast Asian mainland, under the pretext that they were simply engaging in coastal trade, than to clear on ocean voyages to the Philippines or Borneo.⁵⁷ Secondly, "Wako pirates" (Japanese, Ryukyu, or Chinese renegades operating outside the Chinese official order) attacked the Fujian coast in 1439 and 1443 and rendered this eastern route both dangerous and suspect to Chinese officialdom. In the first half of the sixteenth century some of these pirates were reported to be operating as far afield as the Philippines and Borneo. They probably

⁵⁴ G.W. Skinner, *Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1957), p. 3.

⁵⁵ *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*, p. 123.

⁵⁶ Pigafetta, *First Voyage*, p. 54, however, reports the intriguing information picked up in the western Visayas that "six or eight junks belonging to the Lequian people go yearly" to Luzon. This should be a reference to the Ryukyu Islands, known as Lequios to the Portuguese. The fact that the relatively abundant Ryukyuan documentation of southern voyages makes no mention of any Philippine destinations, however, invites the speculation that these were the same freebooters—Japanese, Ryukyuan, or Chinese—referred to as "Wako" by Chinese sources. The Ryukyu missions to Melaka, Sumatra, and Java appear to have sailed by way of the China coast, where their wrecks were occasionally reported.

⁵⁷ John E. Wills, *Pepper, Guns and Parleys: The Dutch East India Company and China, 1622–81* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 7; J.V. Mills "Chinese Navigators in Insulinde about A.D. 1500", *Archipel* 18 (1979): p. 70.

carried some trade themselves, but they rendered continuous and orderly contacts impossible.⁵⁸

These problems on the eastern route, together with the disturbed condition of fifteenth-century Java, with its constant internal wars and lack of political or commercial centre, made Melaka increasingly attractive in the second half of the fifteenth century as the pre-eminent entrepôt for collecting Archipelago produce for shipment to China. Melaka, with Champa and Siam, maintained both its tributary relations with China and its semi-legal private trade. By 1500 the Malay sultanate had a virtual monopoly of the intermediary trade between China on the one hand and the Philippine and Indonesian archipelagoes on the other.

Sino-Southeast Asians in the Melaka-centred trade around 1500

In early Portuguese descriptions of the Indonesian Archipelago no mention is made of a resident Chinese minority. Chinese were noticed as a minor element in Melaka, the commerce of which at its heyday around 1500 emerges in relative detail from Portuguese sources. A small group of Chinese lived in Kampung Cina on the southern bank of the Melaka River. There were women among them, who "look like Spanish women. They put a great deal of ceruse on their faces and paint on the top of it, and they are so made up that Seville has no advantage over them".⁵⁹ Yet the Malay Annals, which describe the wealth of a number of Indians, make no mention of Chinese traders, and their only references to China are of the intense diplomatic relations during the earlier half of the century.⁶⁰ The Portuguese also fail to give the name of any resident Chinese, in striking contrast to the numerous Hindu and Javanese leaders with whom they dealt in the early years.⁶¹ Pires said of the local Chinese: "They are a weak people, of small account. Those who are to be seen in Melaka are not very truthful, and steal—that is the common people".⁶² One must assume that whatever Chinese elements there were in the earlier Melaka elite had been assimilated and were no longer regarded as Chinese.

The Portuguese did encounter China-based Chinese traders, who sailed annually between Guangzhou (Canton) and Melaka, often by way of Champa and Siam. When Albuquerque's fleet arrived off Melaka in 1511,

⁵⁸ Kwan-wai So, *Japanese Piracy in Ming China during the Sixteenth Century* (n.p.: Michigan State University Press, 1975), pp. 15–20, 169–70.

⁵⁹ *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*, p. 117.

⁶⁰ "Sejarah Melayu", pp. 89–96.

⁶¹ Luis Filipe Thomaz, "Melaka et ses communautés marchandes au tournant du 16^e siècle" in *Marchands et hommes d'affaires asiatiques dans l'Océan Indien et la Mer de Chine, 13^e–20^e siècles*, ed. Denys Lombard and Jean Aubin (Paris: Editions de l'École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1988), p. 39.

⁶² *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*, p. 116.

five large Chinese junks were anchored at an offshore island (Pulau Cina) and agreed to take messages from the Portuguese to Siam and China.⁶³ The only Chinese merchant important enough to be named in Portuguese letters was also China-based—one Chulata, who brought several junks to Melaka in 1509, 1511, 1513, and 1517.⁶⁴ Tomé Pires explained why there were not more China-based junks making the trip south in this period:

No Chinese may set out in the direction of Siam, Java, Melaka, Pasai and beyond, without permission from the governors of Canton [Guangzhou], and they charge so much for the licence to go and come back that they cannot afford it and do not go.⁶⁵

It appears that the majority of the shipping between the Malay world and China around 1500 was not China-based but in Southeast Asian junks, owned by Melaka merchants whom the Portuguese labelled “Malaio”, “Jaoa”, and “Luçõe” rather than Chinese. Several Melaka junks sailed every year with the monsoon to Guangzhou (Canton), where one island in the Pearl River estuary was designated for their use and another for the ships from Siam.⁶⁶ The rulers of Pahang, Kampar, and Inderagiri were said to invest in the lucrative sailings to Guangzhou, as well as the sultan of Melaka himself.⁶⁷ Pires twice mentions that the junks of the Malays and Javanese were not allowed to proceed to the city of Guangzhou because of the fear in which they were held, but when describing details of the city he adds, “so the Luções say who have been there”.⁶⁸

These Luções demand some attention. The term “Luzon” enters history in the *Ming Shi Lu*, where it refers to the area of Manila Bay. In 1372, and again in 1405 and 1410, this settlement sent envoys to the new Ming emperor. It seems likely that a port was established in Manila Bay, or at least began to flourish there, as a result of the China trade evoked by the early Ming initiatives. The Chinese missions to Philippine states and Brunei probably followed the “eastern” route past Taiwan and Luzon. Although initially of minor significance, Manila would then have been a port of call for more important and frequent tributaries of China, including Sulu and Brunei. After 1427, Philippine toponyms disappear from Chinese sources, as we have seen, and the eastern route appears to have been abandoned, with Sulu ceasing to be a major centre. An artery of trade developed southwest from Manila to Brunei and Melaka, where goods for the China market were exchanged. “They [Luzons] have two or three

⁶³ Ibid. pp. 97–99, 113–14; *Lettera de Giovanni da Empoli*, ed. A. Bausani (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1970), pp. 132–33.

⁶⁴ Thomaz, “Melaka”, p. 39.

⁶⁵ *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*, p. 119.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 122–24.

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 284–85.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 121–23.

junks, at most. They take the merchandise to Burney [Brunei] and from there they come to Melaka. . . . The Bruneians go to the lands of the Luzons to buy gold."⁶⁹ This trade route made Brunei, which had been strongly exposed to Chinese influence in the early 1400s, the chief metropolis and cultural exemplar for the "Luzons" of Manila.

For the Portuguese, the Luzons and "Burneos" (Bruneians) were so closely related they were "almost one people".⁷⁰ Several Portuguese writers referred to the people of Brunei as Luzons.⁷¹ The ruling elites of both places had been recently Islamized. When Magellan's expedition visited Brunei in 1521, a marriage was being prepared between the sultan's daughter and a son of a Luzon ruler, who was already related to the Brunei ruling house.⁷² In Melaka itself there were a few important Luzon traders and a community of about five hundred Luzons at Minjam just north of the city. The principal Luzon trader was Regimo de Raja, whom the Portuguese appointed temenggong and leader of the Malay community until his death in 1513. He sent ships to China as well as to Siam, Brunei, west Java and Sumatra. Several junks were sent to China by his brother-in-law and one each year by another Luzon with a Malay title, Kuria Diraja.⁷³ The Luzons were in fact the principal Melaka traders to China, which is difficult to understand unless they had brought with them to Melaka some knowledge of Chinese commerce and customs.

It seems probable that the Luzon-Brunei connection arose when both centres were rising into commercial significance in consequence of their close connection with China in the early fifteenth century. Although one of their common features at that time must have been an admixture of Chinese, these had been completely assimilated by the end of the century into what was effectively a new ethnic group of seafarers. The fact that Luzons continued to sail to China from their base in Melaka suggests that the western route replaced the eastern one in the mid-fifteenth century, because its entrepôts—notably Melaka and Siam—had easier access to the Guangdong bureaucracy. I suspect that the resumption of Chinese trade with Brunei noted by Pires (above) was the work not of China-based

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 133–34.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p. 134.

⁷¹ Rui de Brito Patalim [1514], Alvarez [1515], Jorge de Albuquerque [1515], da Costa [1518], all in Robert Nicholl, ed., *European Sources for the History of the Sultanate of Brunei in the Sixteenth Century* (Bandar Seri Begawan: Muzium Brunei, 1975), pp. 3–8. *The Travels of Mendez Pinto* [1578], trans. Rebecca Catz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 49, 107, 112.

⁷² Pigafetta, *First Voyage*, pp. 58–59. Nicholl, *European Sources* 1975, pp. 13–16. References to the "king" of Luzon should be understood to refer to one among many chiefs, advantaged by his Muslim and commercial connections. Pires (*Suma Oriental*, p. 133) believed that the Luzons "have no king, but . . . are ruled by a group of elders".

⁷³ *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*, p. 134. Thomaz, "Melaka", p. 38.

traders but of Sino-Southeast Asians based in Indochinese ports. A trade route from Siam to Mindanao by way of Brunei was outlined in the *Shun Feng Xiang Song*, written sometime between 1567 and 1619,⁷⁴ while Magellan's expedition encountered in the Philippines no ships from China but one from "Ciama" (Siam or Champa).⁷⁵

The Javanese were far more numerous in Melaka, dominating trade to the Indonesian Archipelago. The "Jaoas" the Portuguese knew were merchants of the *pasisir* ports—Muslim, commercially oriented, and multi-ethnic in origin. Pires reported various theories he heard from Javanese in both Melaka and Java to account for the fact that "the Javanese used to have affinity with the Chinese". Some said that the king of China sent his daughter to marry the king of Java (the *puteri Cina* story) and that numerous retainers and the *cash* which became the currency of Java were part of this alliance. Others said that the *cash* came in simply because "the Chinese used to trade in Java long before Melaka existed. But now they had not been there for the last hundred years".⁷⁶ Pires pointed out that the rulers of the Javanese port-states were "not Javanese of long standing in the country", but descended from Chinese and other immigrants.⁷⁷ One example was the ruler of Demak, "Pate Rodim" to the Portuguese, whom de Graaf and Pigeaud identify with the Chinese Muslim *patih* of Demak mentioned in the Banten chronicles.⁷⁸

These stories of Chinese ancestry are so widespread that they must have had a basis in the beliefs of elite Javanese, at a time before antagonism between Muslims and Chinese made the claiming of Chinese ancestry unfashionable. The most influential Portuguese chronicler, João de Barros, also attributed Chinese ancestry both to the "Iaoas" (Javanese) of Java and the "Iauijs" (*Jawi*, Malay-speaking Muslims) of coastal Sumatra. The Javanese, he wrote, "according to what they say themselves came from China, and it appears that what they say is true, because in their appearance and in the form of their civilization they follow the Chinese closely".⁷⁹ The *Jawi* of Sumatra, in turn, "are not natives of the land which they inhabit, but people who come from areas of China, because they imitate the Chinese in their appearance, their political system and their ingenuity in all mechanical works".⁸⁰ As late as 1596, the first Dutch fleet reported

⁷⁴ Mills, "Chinese Navigators", pp. 71, 81. This dating derives from a letter from J.V. Mills to W.H. Scott in 1983, for which I am indebted to both these scholars.

⁷⁵ Pigafetta, *First Voyage*, p. 33.

⁷⁶ *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*, p. 179. See also Reid, "Sino-Javanese Shipping", pp. 196–97.

⁷⁷ *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*, p. 182.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 183–84. De Graaf and Pigeaud, *Moslimse vorstendommen*, pp. 34–39.

⁷⁹ Barros, *Da Asia*, Dec. 2, Livro 9, p. 352.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, Dec. 3, Livro 5, p. 510.

of Banten that "the Javanese themselves when asked say that they have their origin from the Chinese", a group of whom had fled China because of its oppressive demands for labour.⁸¹

It seems reasonable to conclude that between about 1450 and 1520, China-based Chinese shipping sailed scarcely if at all to the islands of Southeast Asia. During that period the extensive trade between the two societies took place primarily through intermediate ports. Melaka was the most important, followed, after its fall, by Johor and Patani, but Ayutthaya and Champa also continued to be major entrepôts for the China trade. During this period the Chinese effectively merged into the cosmopolitan society of the Southeast Asian ports, so that at the time of the arrival of the Europeans they were no longer perceived as a separate group in Island Southeast Asia, and only as a very minor community in Melaka. The "pool" had seeped away into the surrounding society, reappearing in the creation of new commercial minorities known as Malays, Javanese and Luzons, who had their finest hour in this period as carriers of the produce of Southeast Asia around the region and to China.

The late Ming flow and the rebirth of dualism, 1567–1640

In 1567 a new emperor, Muzong, came to the Chinese throne. He broke with Ming tradition by yielding to the repeated appeals from the authorities of Fujian that junks be allowed to trade legally and thus bring profit to the government. Fifty junks a year were initially granted licences (*wen-yin*) to trade in Southeast Asia. The eastern route from Fujian via Taiwan to Luzon and beyond must have reopened at this time if not before. Already in 1567 Legazpi reported from Cebu that Chinese and Japanese ships came every year to Luzon to trade, although the Spanish

⁸¹ Willem Lodewycksz [1598] in *De eerste Schipvaart der Nederlanders naar Oost-Indië onder Cornelis de Houtman 1595–1597*, ed. G.P. Rouffaer and J.W. Ijzerman, Vol. 1 (The Hague: Nijhoff for Linschoten-Vereniging, 1915), p. 99. A little more could be said if the curious Chinese–Malay–Dutch "chronicle" presented to the world by Mangaradja Parlindungan in 1964, and later translated by de Graaf and Pigeaud, were to be admitted as an independent source (which I continue to doubt). This source makes two further points of interest that cannot be independently checked:

(1) The Zheng He missions established a Muslim Chinese community in Manila, the head of which, Gan Eng Chu, moved to Java in 1423, where he became *syahbandar* of Tuban. His daughter would then be the Nyai Ageng Manila of Javanese tradition, who married Raden Rahmat, one of the leading Muslim *wali* (saint-apostles) of Java.

(2) The *peranakan* Chinese community in central Java split in the second half of the fifteenth century when contact with China was lost, the Muslim element becoming Javanese in culture, while another element retained its identity as a Chinese cultural minority centred around the Sam Po Kong Temple and the dockyard of Semarang (H.J. de Graaf and Th.G.Th. Pigeaud, *Chinese Muslims in Java in the 15th and 16th Centuries*, ed. M.C. Ricklefs (Melbourne: Monash University Southeast Asia Monographs, 1984), pp. 15–22.

did not encounter them personally until they reached Manila in 1569.⁸² In 1589 the number of junks licensed for the south was raised to 88, in 1592 to 100, and in 1597 to 117.⁸³ Of the eighty-eight junks licensed after 1589, fully half went to the "eastern ocean" (the Philippines and Borneo), responding to the opportunity now represented by the Spanish galleon trade to exchange Chinese silk and other manufactures for silver. Detailed Spanish port records show that Chinese shipping to Manila reached its peak in the 1630s, with an average of thirty-one arrivals each year of that decade and a peak of fifty-one junks in 1637.⁸⁴

A new set of Southeast Asian port-cities arose in response to this flow, comparable to those that had emerged in the early 1400s. Manila is a striking case in point, since its economic viability is inconceivable without this junk trade. Much the same can be said of Hoi An (Faifo to Europeans), the commercial lifeline of the "southern" Vietnamese state known to Europeans as Cochinchina, and of Pnompenh, Patani, Banten, and to some extent even Banten's rival in west Java, the Dutch port of Batavia. Of the forty-four Chinese ships licensed for the "western ocean" in 1589, eight were intended for Hoi An or adjacent Vietnamese ports, three each for Champa and Cambodia, eight for western Java, and seven for southern Sumatra.⁸⁵ The most lucrative aspect of the trade with the Mainland ports was, or soon became, commerce with Japanese ships, which brought large quantities of silver to Southeast Asian ports in the first three decades of the seventeenth century, largely to exchange against Chinese silk. Hoi An was the favourite port of these Japanese ships (almost three per year in the period 1604–35), with Manila, Ayutthaya and Pnompenh not far behind.⁸⁶

Within a few decades of 1567 the large Chinese junks had also driven the Portuguese out of the lucrative pepper trade to China from western

⁸² Legazpi, 23 July 1567 in E.H. Blair and J.A. Robertson, eds., *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1898* (Cleveland, Ohio: A.H. Clark, 55 vols, 1903–09), Vol. 2, p. 238; also Legazpi [1570] in Blair and Robertson, *The Philippine Islands*, Vol. 3, pp. 74, 84, 95, 101–3. The Villalobos expedition had already reported at second hand in the 1540s that Chinese came to Cebu and Mindanao to trade, but it is not clear that these were from China; Blair and Robertson, *The Philippine Islands*, Vol. 2, pp. 69, 72.

⁸³ R.L. Innes, "The Door Ajar: Japan's Foreign Trade in the Seventeenth Century" (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1980), pp. 52–53.

⁸⁴ Pierre Chaunu, *Les Philippines et le Pacifique des Ibériques (XVI^e, XVII^e, XVIII^e siècles). Introduction méthodologique et indices d'activité* (Paris: SEVPEN, 1960), pp. 148–75. See also Table 1 below.

⁸⁵ Zhang Xie, *Dongxi Yang Kao* (A Study of the Eastern and Western Oceans, 1618) (Beijing: 1981), pp. 131–32; also Chingho A. Chen, *Historical Notes on Hô-An (Faifo)* (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Centre for Vietnamese Studies, 1974), p. 12.

⁸⁶ Innes, "The Door Ajar", p. 58.

Java and southern Sumatra.⁸⁷ Chinese and Dutch reports confirm that annual Chinese fleets to this region remained at the level of about eight junks a year, each of five or six hundred tonnes, through the first three decades of the seventeenth century.⁸⁸ The boom years of the age of commerce occurred from about 1570 to 1640, as silver poured into the region from Japan, Mexico, and Europe, while Japanese, Chinese, Europeans, and Indians all competed for their share of the valuable Southeast Asian trade.⁸⁹ The Chinese junk trade flourished as never before and hundreds of Chinese disembarked every season at the major ports of Southeast Asia.

In contrast to the situation encountered by the Portuguese a century earlier, the Dutch and English found large and very distinct colonies of Chinese in Asian ports such as Hoi An, Patani, Banten, and Pnompenh, as well as Manila. In Hoi An there were reckoned to be four to five thousand Chinese by 1642, and they were assuming commercial dominance with the withdrawal of the Japanese.⁹⁰ Patani's prosperity was due not so much to the licensed Chinese junks (only one of which had Patani as its official destination in the 1589 list) as to freebooters who had defied imperial trade bans and were regarded as "pirates" in the Ming Annals. Some two thousand such Chinese had made Patani their commercial base in the 1560s, and by 1600 they had extended their trade network throughout the Archipelago, notably to Brunei, where van Noort encountered them.⁹¹ They then represented almost half the population of Patani city, acting as "merchants, craftsmen and labourers . . . Most trade here is done by this nation, and most wealth is found with them. They have the right to whole districts of their own, and are among the most influential with the Queen".⁹² In Banten they numbered about three thousand, living in a separate quarter outside the city wall in brick houses quite different from the Javanese style. They were in modern terms a *totok* community, differing markedly from the Javanese in language, dress, religion, and

⁸⁷ Lodewycksz, *De eerste schipvaart*, p. 105.

⁸⁸ W. Ph. Coolhaas, ed., *Generale Missiven van Gouverneurs-Generaal en Raden aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, Vol. 2 (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1964), p. 1; M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofs, *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1500 and about 1630* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1962), p. 398; Leonard Blussé, *Strange Company. Chinese Settlers, Mestizo Women and the Dutch in VOC Batavia* (Dordrecht: KITLV, 1986), pp. 109–15.

⁸⁹ This is a major theme of Reid, *Age of Commerce*, Vol. 2.

⁹⁰ Fransisco, "Declaratie" [1642], in W.J.M. Buch, *De Oost-Indische Compagnie en Quinam. De betrekkingen der Nederlanders met Annam in de XVIIe eeuw* (Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, 1929), pp. 120–23.

⁹¹ Kobata and Matsuda, *Ryukyuan Relations*, p. 182. *De reis om de wereld door Olivier van Noort 1598–1601*, ed. J.W. Ijzerman, Vol. 1, (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1926), p. 124.

⁹² *De Vierde schipvaart der nederlanders naar Oost-Indië onder Jacob Wilkens en Jacob van Neck (1599–1604)*, ed. H.A. van Foreest and A. de Booy, Vol. 1, (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1980), p. 223.

entertainment. Foreigners clearly perceived that there were two important and distinct population groups in Banten—Chinese and Javanese—with considerable tension between them.⁹³ Although many Chinese still acquired concubines or temporary wives among the Indonesian population, they expected to leave them eventually and return home.

For the next four centuries there would always be a Chinese identity in Southeast Asia. Since the tap would not completely close again until 1949, China never again appeared as remote to Overseas Chinese, or as impossible to return to, as it had in the late fifteenth century. Moreover, a separate Chinese identity was stimulated by the presence of Dutch and Spanish enclaves. The Dutch celebrated ethnic difference, with separate quarters, dress, administrative structures, and recognized religions for each group. Hoadley has shown how in Cirebon at the end of the seventeenth century Dutch policy deliberately encouraged the separation of *peranakan* (Chinese mestizo) and Javanese elites by classifying *peranakan* as Chinese and excluding them from holding office.⁹⁴ It became difficult to remain culturally ambivalent; traders who wished to remain commercially active had to opt for calling themselves Chinese.

In the Philippines, as Wickberg has pointed out, relations between Spanish and Chinese quickly “fell into a pattern of latent distrust and hostility”, influenced by tortured Spanish traditions of dealing with indispensable outcaste Jewish and Muslim minorities in their own country.⁹⁵ Chinese who married Filipinas or held privileged positions were required to become Catholic and cut their hair. About five hundred Chinese had already taken this step by 1600, and began to form the Chinese mestizo community of Binondo, north of Manila across the Pasig River. Other Chinese, reckoned to number about twenty thousand at the time of a terrible pogrom against them in 1603, were meant to live within a kind of ghetto east of the city, the *parian*, and were subject to inconsistent bouts of taxation, restriction, and massacre alternating with tolerance of their economically essential role. Despite their concern for Christianization, the Spanish no more than the Dutch would allow assimilation into their own ruling class, so that the growing mestizo community became a privileged but distinct minority, free to move around the islands into intermediary economic roles.

⁹³ “the Javans . . . do much rejoyce when they see a Chynes goe to execution (as also the Chyneses doe when they see a Javan goe to his death)”, Edmund Scott [1606], “An Exact Discourse” in *The Voyage of Henry Middleton to the Moluccas*, ed. Sir William Foster (London: Hakluyt Society, 1943), p. 121; also pp. 97, 169–76; Lodewycksz, *De eerste schipvaart*, pp. 99, 121–25.

⁹⁴ Mason Hoadley, “Javanese, Peranakan, and Chinese Elites in Cirebon: Changing Ethnic Boundaries”, *JAS* 47: 3 (1988), pp. 503–17.

⁹⁵ Edgar Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life, 1850–1898* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1965), pp. 8–9.

The establishment of Western-ruled enclaves, in short, along with the reestablishment of regular contact with China, created a more dualistic relationship between Southeast Asians and Chinese, whereby the former began to be identified with political functions and the latter with commercial ones.

The early Qing spurt and Sino-Southeast Asian politics, 1680–1740

The boom of the early seventeenth century turned to crisis in the 1640s, as China experienced rebellion, famine, and the upheaval of the end of the Ming dynasty (1644), while European demand for Southeast Asian goods slumped, Japan withdrew into relative isolation, and the Dutch East India Company (VOC) established a near monopoly over the most valuable of Southeast Asia's products.⁹⁶ The steady flow of Chinese ships and men to Southeast Asian cities faltered during the middle decades of the century. Table 1 shows the slump in Chinese ships arrivals in Manila, where records are most complete. Most of the arrivals after 1644 were ships belonging to the Ming loyalist, Zheng Chenggong (Koxinga), who operated an autonomous trade-based regime in coastal Fujian and Taiwan between 1646 and his death in 1662. The maritime regions of China, having gained much from the age of commerce, were particularly reluctant to see the imposition of an alien Manchu regime from the north, apparently completely hostile to their interests. The new Qing imperial government tried to close down foreign trade altogether and even forced the evacuation of the coastal regions of Fujian to deny resources to the Zheng regime. Among Chinese involved in the Southeast Asia trade, however, Zheng's struggle must have served to legitimate the unprecedented idea of a trade-based Chinese maritime identity distinct from the imperial order.

Table 1. Chinese Ship Arrivals per Year in Manila, 1620–99 (Ten-Year Averages)

<i>Decade</i>	<i>Average Number of Ships</i>
1620–29:	14.8
1630–39:	31.1
1640–49:	15.7
1650–59:	6.7
1660–69:	6.0
1670–79:	5.7
1680–89:	9.4
1690–99:	16.1

Source: Based on information in Chaunu, *Les Philippines*, pp. 148–75.

⁹⁶ Anthony Reid, "The Seventeenth Century Crisis in Southeast Asia", *MAS* 24: 4 (1990), 639–59.

In 1683 the resistance led by Zheng's son in Taiwan was overcome by a Qing fleet. Many who had supported it, however, took refuge in ports to which they had traded in Southeast Asia. This was one—unusually political—source of the Chinese immigrants who constituted the early Qing spurt. The other, more peaceful, flow derived from the greater facility of movement which followed the reopening of foreign trade for Chinese junks and the partial opening of Guangzhou to foreign ships by the victorious Manchus in 1684.

This freeing of Chinese trade did make possible the equipping of many more junks on the Fujian coast for voyages to Southeast Asia and Japan than in the troubled preceding half-century. Nevertheless, the junk trade did not reach the levels of the age of commerce or of the boom period that would begin in the late eighteenth century. The period 1690–1740, which Blussé identifies as “the heyday of the junk trade”, can be accepted as such only for Batavia, where annual junk arrivals reached an all-time high in 1720–40 at about seventeen per year.⁹⁷ The century after 1650 was commercially dominated by Batavia, with VOC monopolies on cloves, nutmeg, and cinnamon and a near monopoly on pepper. Few cargoes were to be found at independent ports, since, as one Chinese shipper complained in 1717, the Southeast Asian region “is impoverished everywhere”.⁹⁸ There was a sharp decline in the Japan branch of trade, well documented as a result of the careful monitoring by the Japanese authorities of Chinese and Dutch ships arriving in Nagasaki. The enthusiasm of China-based Chinese shippers following the lifting of imperial bans on trade in 1684 only served to heighten Japanese alarm at the unprecedented flood of junks trying to enter the lucrative market in Nagasaki. In 1688 the *bakufu* imposed a strict quota of seventy Chinese vessels a year in the Nagasaki trade; only ten of these were allowed from Southeast Asia (Tongking, one; Cochinchina, three; Cambodia, one; Siam, two; Patani, one; Batavia, two)—well down from the fifteen a year of the 1660s. By 1708 this was further reduced to five.⁹⁹

This was one indication that the 1680–1740 period was not a good one for commercial relations between China and independent Southeast Asia. In addition, the reign of King Phetracha (r. 1688–1703) in Siam represented the lowest point for Chinese trade based in Ayutthaya.¹⁰⁰ The Kangxi

⁹⁷ Blussé, *Strange Company*, pp. 121–37.

⁹⁸ Tōsen 2 of 1717, from Siam, in Yoneo Ishii, ed., *The Junk Trade from Southeast Asia, 1679 to 1723: Translations from the Kai-Kentai*, Singapore, forthcoming.

⁹⁹ Innes, “The Door Ajar”, pp. 322–53.

¹⁰⁰ Dhiravat na Pombejra, “Ayutthaya at the End of the Seventeenth Century: Was There a Shift to Isolation?” in *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era: Trade, Power, and Belief*, ed. Anthony Reid (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 262–70; Reid, *Age of Commerce*, Vol. II, pp. 308–09.

emperor did not help matters by returning to a policy of banning private trade to the south in 1717. This ban was lifted only in 1727, as a growing illicit trade in cheap rice from Siam (and, to a lesser extent, Luzon) convinced authorities that this trade provided not only luxuries but also a vital supplement to the diet of coastal Fujian.¹⁰¹ Only in the 1740s did the fleet of Chinese junks trading to Southeast Asia climb back to the level it had reached during the peak of the age of commerce in the period 1590 to 1620—about 110 vessels a year.¹⁰²

The early Qing spurt was therefore far from a steady flow. Nevertheless, the political stance of some of the anti-Manchu migrants gave it a character not seen since the beginning of the previous dynasty. Chinese-led states arose in the southern part of the Indochinese peninsula that resembled those of the early 1400s in their commercial orientation, their readiness to resort to arms (which could descend into piracy), and their gradual coming to terms with the host population.

In 1679 there arrived in the Cochin-China port of Hoi An some fifty junks and three thousand soldiers of the demoralized Zheng forces, who had decided to seek their fortune in the Indochinese peninsula rather than submit to the Qing. The Nguyen ruler of the southern Vietnamese state, no doubt concerned at the force they represented, sent them to the Mekong delta area, where Cambodian rule was in disarray through the rivalry of three candidates for the throne. As a Chinese junk captain reported the events of December 1682, "the king of Cambodia thinking it to be an attack . . . evacuated the city of Cambodia [Pnompenh] and fled into the mountains with his subjects. The tiny population of Cambodia, military and civilian all combined, would not exceed a few thousand. This is why they all fled to the mountains".¹⁰³ The Chinese eventually settled the Saigon and My-Tho areas and turned them into bustling markets much frequented by Malays, Cambodians, and Europeans as well as Vietnamese. In effect they formed an autonomous satrapy that pushed back the Khmer but was not fully absorbed into the Vietnamese administration until 1732.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Jennifer Cushman, "Duke Ch'ing Deliberates: A Mid-Eighteenth Century Reassessment of Sino-Nanyang Commercial Relations", *Papers on Far Eastern History* 17 (1978), pp. 141–42; Suebsaeng, "Sino-Siamese", p. 262; G. William Skinner, *Chinese Society in Thailand*, p. 17.

¹⁰² Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit: Sino-Siamese Trade 1652–1853* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 72; Ng Chin-keong, "The Case of Ch'en I-lao: Maritime Trade and Overseas Chinese in Ch'ing Policies, 1717–1754" in Ptak and Rothermunde, pp. 378–81.

¹⁰³ Tosen 9 of 1683 from Siam, in Ishii, *The Junk Trade*.

¹⁰⁴ Chingho Chen, "Mac Thien Tu and Phrayataksin: A Survey on Their Political Stand, Conflicts, and Background", *Proceedings, 7th IAHA Conference, Bangkok 22–26 August 1977* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 1979), pp. 1535–37. Lê Thanh Khôi, *Histoire du Viêt Nam des origines à 1858* (Paris: Sudestasié, 1987), p. 267.

Further west on the Cambodian coast a similar role was played by Mac Cuu, who had fled his native Guangdong in 1671 to serve as a commercial official of the court at Pnompenh. In about 1700 he obtained from the Khmer ruler the farm of gambling revenues at the port of Hatien, then something of a piratic frontier. He flourished, attracted many Hainanese and Cantonese as well as Vietnamese and Khmers fleeing from dynastic troubles, and built a little state embracing a string of ports along the eastern shore of the Gulf of Siam. In 1708 he transferred his loyalty to the rising power of Cochinchina, but retained his own armed force and administrative structure until his death in 1735. His Sino-Vietnamese son, Mac Thien-tu, continued the tradition, minting coins, building fortresses, laying out markets, and conducting an independent foreign policy, frequently intervening in Cambodia generally in opposition to Siam. In his capital he built in a Chinese style, insisted on Ming-style dress for his officials, and established a Confucian temple and schools. Only with the victory of the Tayson rebels in 1777 was he driven from Hatien.¹⁰⁵

Despite the continued difficulties in the way of Chinese–Southeast Asian trade, the Chinese profile in many parts of Southeast Asia rose rapidly in this period. One reason was the decline of most of the alternative foreign trading groups. European, Indian Muslim, and Japanese traders largely withdrew from Siam, Vietnam, and Cambodia in the last decades of the seventeenth century for a variety of reasons. For the Europeans access to Guangzhou after 1684 provided an alternative to buying Chinese goods in Southeast Asian ports. Peace between the rival Vietnamese kingdoms after 1680 reduced their need for European military technology and allowed them to return to their systematic discouragement of traders other than Chinese.

In the two Vietnams and Siam, Chinese had become the overwhelmingly dominant factor in both internal and external trade by 1740.¹⁰⁶ In Mindanao, Sultan Barahaman (r. 1671–99) pursued a deliberate policy of attracting Chinese immigrants, even learning their language.¹⁰⁷ In Java and the Philippines, Chinese spread from the European enclave cities, where

¹⁰⁵ Chen, "Mac Thien Tu", pp. 1541–63; Mary Somers Heidhues in this volume.

¹⁰⁶ Pierre Poivre, *Les mémoires d'un voyageur*, ed. Louis Malleret (Paris: EFEO, 1968), p. 73; "Voyage de Pierre Poivre en Cochinchine: Description de la Cochinchine (1749–1750)", *Revue de l'Extrême-Orient* 3: 1 (1885), p. 107 now translated by Kristine Alilunas-Rodgers as "Description of Cochinchina 1749–50" in *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on the Economic History of Cochinchina (Dang Trong), 1602–1777*, ed. Li Tana and Anthony Reid (Singapore: ISEAS and Economic History of Southeast Asia Project, 1993), p. 85; Abbé Richard, *Histoire naturelle, civile et politique du Tonquin* (Paris: Moutard, 1778), Vol. 2, pp. 292–93; Chen, *Historical Notes on Hôi An*, pp. 23–24.

¹⁰⁷ Ruurdje Laarhoven, "The Chinese in Magindanao in the Seventeenth Century", *Philippine Studies* 35 (1987), pp. 39–41.

they had been concentrated, to dominate internal trade throughout the islands.

The last stand of autonomous states, 1740–1850

The middle years of the eighteenth century marked a watershed in the triangular relationship of Southeast Asians, Chinese, and Europeans. As global commerce quickened in the second half of the eighteenth century, an implicit partnership developed between the Chinese junk trade, now accepted and even reinforced by imperial authority, and the remaining centres of independent Southeast Asian power. In the European enclaves in Java and Luzon, on the other hand, Chinese activity became a largely mestizo phenomenon.

The deeper causes of this transition have yet to be adequately analysed. The best studied changes were on the European side—the rising English demand for Chinese tea and for Southeast Asian goods that could be exchanged in China for it; the rise of a polyglot horde of free traders (though with English flags dominant) at the expense of the decrepit monopolies of the Dutch and English companies and the Spanish crown; and the growing tendency of the Dutch and Spanish to fund their Asian operations less by trading and more by producing tropical export crops (sugar, coffee, and tobacco). Some influences arose from China, where the strong, prosperous, and rigidly Confucian reign of the Qianlong emperor (1736–95) expanded the demand for imports, revived interventionism and tribute among the southern “barbarians”, and re-opened Guangzhou in 1757 as the sole port for “foreign” trade (thereby allowing “Chinese” junks, wherever based, to trade freely to and from a large number of ports). Other phenomena seem entirely Southeast Asian, including the regime crises in Burma, Siam, and Vietnam, which saw the emergence of new and vigorous dynasties—the Konbaung (1752), Jakkri (1782), and Nguyen (1802) respectively.

The beginning of this transition was dramatically marked by the massacre in 1740 of about ten thousand Chinese in Batavia—all those who could not escape into the countryside. This caused a sharp decline in the junk trade to Batavia and a period of upheaval in Java in which the surviving Chinese joined with dissident Javanese to oppose the Dutch Company and its allies in the pathetic Kartasura court. A separate Chinese identity in Java was now less attractive and there was a new tendency (which ended with the Java War of 1825–30) for successful Chinese to “become Javanese” through conversion to Islam.¹⁰⁸ A remarkable example of the

¹⁰⁸ Peter Carey, “Changing Javanese Perceptions of the Chinese Communities in Central Java 1755–1825”, *Indonesia* 37 (1984), pp. 8–9.

phenomenon was the Han family, who became virtual rulers of the eastern salient of Java in this period, with some members of the family becoming Javanese local rulers while others retained their Chinese identities in the Dutch-ruled cities.¹⁰⁹

Spanish policy shifted more deliberately, in the expulsion of Chinese from the Philippines in 1755 (reiterated in 1766), designed to replace unassimilated Chinese in commercial functions throughout the islands by Chinese mestizos and Filipinos. This initiated the remarkable transition documented by Wickberg, whereby Chinese mestizos, representing about 5 per cent of the total Philippine population around 1800, emerged as a new Filipino elite. Profiting from the opportunities created by the departure of most China-born Chinese and the increasingly liberal economic and educational climate in the colony, mestizos gained prominence not only in trade, retailing, and craftsmanship, but also in estate management, landholding, and the professions. Meanwhile, many of the expelled Chinese settled in areas outside Spanish control, such as Sulu and Mindanao, where they helped to sustain the last stand of independent states.¹¹⁰

While the Europeans became more hostile to Chinese, the independent Southeast Asian states became yet more dependent upon them. The global expansion of trade in the second half of the eighteenth century brought with it obvious dangers that the well-armed Europeans would again move from trade to domination. By contrast, "The peaceable, unambitious and supple character of the Chinese [junk traders], and the conviction, on the part of the native governments, of their exclusive devotion to commercial pursuits, disarm all jealousy, and make them welcome guests everywhere".¹¹¹ Though a declining presence in Batavia and Manila, the Chinese junk trade flourished elsewhere as never before. It became the lifeline of independent states from Siam to Sulu.

The major Southeast Asian centre for the junk trade was Siam, as Jennifer Cushman's thesis abundantly demonstrated. After its capital at Ayutthaya fell to the Burmese in 1767, Siam's fortunes were restored by Phya Tak (King Taksin), son of a Teochiu immigrant father and a Thai mother, though brought up in the household of a Thai nobleman. He fled the Burmese advance to the southeast, where Teochiu immigrants were principally concentrated, rallied support to drive the Burmese out, and founded a new capital at Thonburi. During his reign, and that of his

¹⁰⁹ Claudine Salmon, "The Han Family of East Java. Entrepreneurship and Politics (18th–19th Centuries)", *Archipel* 41 (1991), pp. 53–87.

¹¹⁰ Wickberg, *The Chinese*, pp. 20–38. Also John A. Larkin, *The Pampangans. Colonial Society in a Philippine Province* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 48–56.

¹¹¹ John Crawfurd, *History of the Indian Archipelago* (Edinburgh: Constable, 1820), Vol. 3, p. 185.

successor and son-in-law, Rama I (1782–1809), also half-Chinese, at Bangkok, Chinese shippers, shipbuilders, and traders were particularly encouraged to settle on the Chaophraya. Bangkok probably replaced Batavia as the leading port of Southeast Asia in this period, with about 280 junks based there, 80 of them trading principally to China, 50 to Vietnam, and the remainder to the ports in the Malay Peninsula, Borneo, southern and eastern Sumatra, and Java. Crawford reckoned that 11500 seamen were engaged in Bangkok's maritime trade, almost all of them of Chinese descent.¹¹² This flourishing trade was accompanied by very correct and profitable relations with Beijing, with every Thai ruler up until Mongkut (1851) seeking imperial investiture. This successful Thai-Chinese partnership made Bangkok the dominant power of the Tai-speaking world, extending its suzerainty throughout the Lao principalities in the north and to Kedah and Terengganu in the south. Recent revisionist scholarship led by Nidhi Aeusrivongse has also demonstrated that the culture of the early Bangkok period was exceptionally cosmopolitan, urban, commercial, outward-looking, experimental, and realist compared with earlier patterns.¹¹³

For the border states, Burma and Vietnam, Chinese influence was necessarily a more mixed blessing. Qianlong was the last Chinese emperor with the strength or motivation to assert himself in Southeast Asia. After the Chinese had fared badly in some border skirmishes in 1766, the emperor determined on punishing Burma and sent a series of expeditions towards Ava in the ensuing three years. All failed in their objectives, but the peace eventually signed between the rival commanders in December 1769 laid the basis for an unusually cordial century of caravan trade and tribute between Burma and China.¹¹⁴

When the powerless Le emperor of Vietnam fled to China before the rebellious Tayson forces in 1788, the Qianlong emperor intervened to attempt to restore him to the throne. The results were similar to those in Burma—an ignominious Chinese withdrawal followed by the restoration of exceptionally warm relations. The Tayson ruler of the north, Nguyen Hue, expressed his apologies and submission and travelled in person to

¹¹² Jennifer Cushman, *Fields from the Sea. Chinese Junk Trade with Siam during the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Studies on Southeast Asia, no. 12) (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1993), pp. 65–114; Skinner, *Chinese Society*, pp. 20–27; John Crawford, *Journal of an Embassy to the Courts of Siam and Cochin-China* (London, 1820; reprint, Kuala Lumpur: OUP, 1967), pp. 414–16.

¹¹³ Nidhi Aeusrivongse, *Pak Kai Lae Bai Rua*, of which an English summary is "The Early Bangkok Period: Literary Change and its Social Causes," *Asian Studies Review* 18:1 (1994), pp. 69–76. See also B.J. Terwiel, *Through Travellers' Eyes. An Approach to Early Nineteenth Century Thai History* (Bangkok: Duang Kamol, 1989), pp. 234–37; David Wyatt, *Thailand. A Short History* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press), pp. 145–55; Craig Reynolds in this volume.

¹¹⁴ D.G.E. Hall, *A History of Southeast Asia* (London: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 412–14.

Beijing in 1790 to attend the celebrations of the emperor's eightieth birthday. Tribute missions were sent in every year of Tayson rule in Hanoi.¹¹⁵ When the Nguyen dynasty succeeded in returning to power and unifying the country in 1802, the French soldiers who had assisted Gia Long to power were gradually removed and an unprecedentedly orthodox replica of a Chinese regime created. From then until the rise of Singapore, Vietnam's foreign trade was "almost exclusively with China" and carried in Chinese junks.¹¹⁶

The states of the Archipelago were always more open to foreign trade of every kind than were the larger kingdoms of the Mainland. They never sought to exclude the dangerous Europeans, but the flourishing junk trade and the Chinese settlers who came with it brought them new prosperity and greater freedom of movement between the competing European powers. States such as Riau, Palembang, Terengganu, Sambas, Brunei, and Sulu were able to establish a new revenue base through the eighteenth-century influx of Chinese miners (of gold and tin) and planters (of pepper and gambier).¹¹⁷

It is something of a surprise to the uninitiated to discover that the frequency of Southeast Asian tribute missions to China during this "last stand", far from being in decline, was at the highest level since the fifteenth century (see graph). Even in the Archipelago, whence all tribute had ceased in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century, the Sulu sultanate suddenly revived the practice in 1727 through the efforts of enterprising junk captains. Seven formal tribute missions were sent through Xiamen (Amoy) between then and 1763, and Sulu was still listed among the regular tribute-senders in a Chinese collection of statutes in 1812.¹¹⁸

The rhythm of flows, interruptions, and seepages

This pattern of abruptly changing relationships between China and Southeast Asia could be discerned through to our own era—as other contributions in this volume make clear. Jennifer Cushman's thesis was particularly concerned with the transition of the period 1820–55, when Singapore replaced Bangkok as the major Southeast Asian entrepôt, and the opening of the treaty ports of Guangzhou, Shanghai, Fuzhou, Ningbo,

¹¹⁵ Truong Buu Lam, "Intervention versus Tribute in Sino-Vietnamese Relations, 1788–1790" in *The Chinese World Order. Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 165–79.

¹¹⁶ John Crawford's "Report on the State of the Annamese Empire", [1823] in *The Mandarin Road to Old Hué* ed. Alastair Lamb (London: Chatto & Windus, 1979), p. 263.

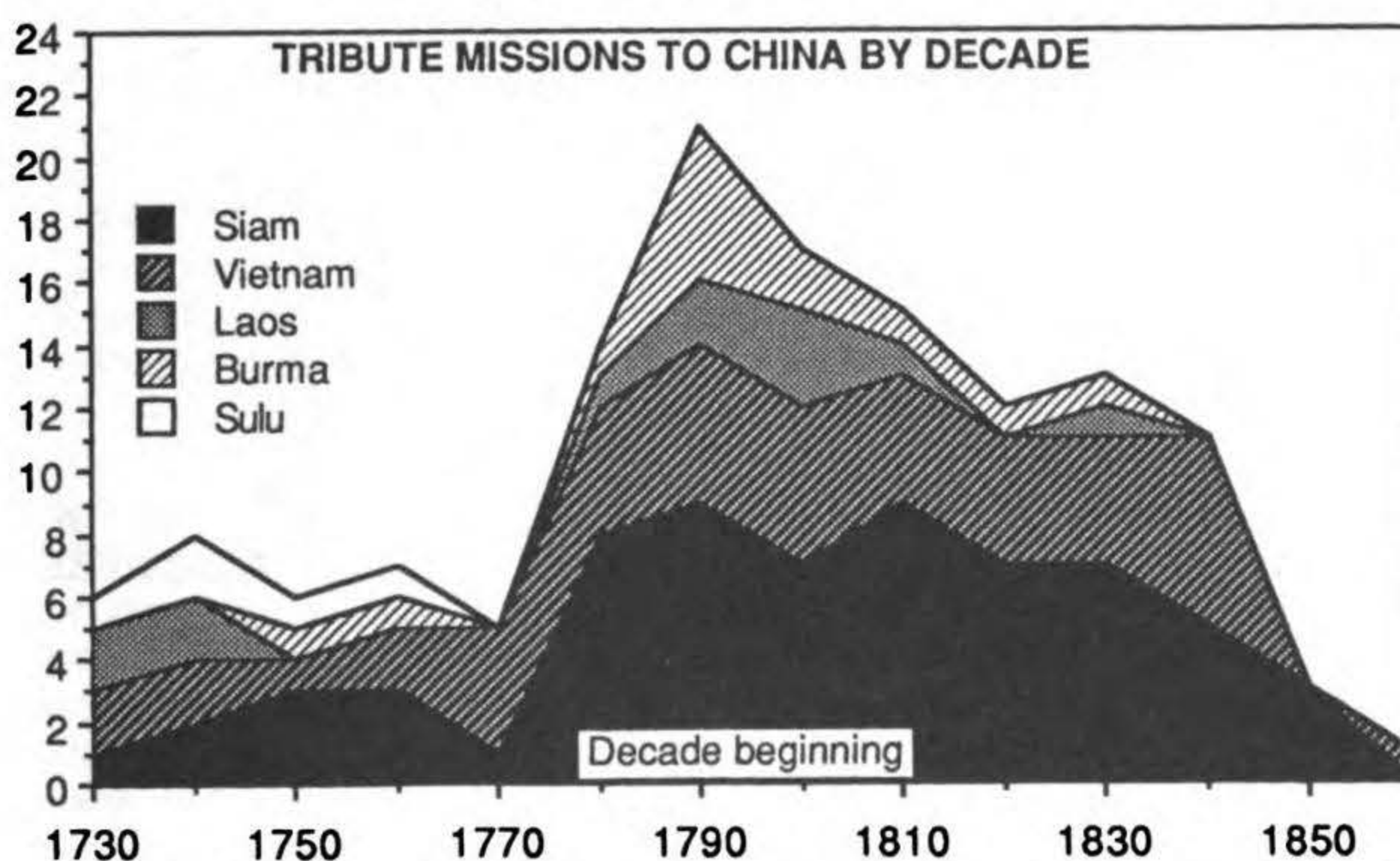
¹¹⁷ This phenomenon is well treated by Mary Somers Heidhues in this volume.

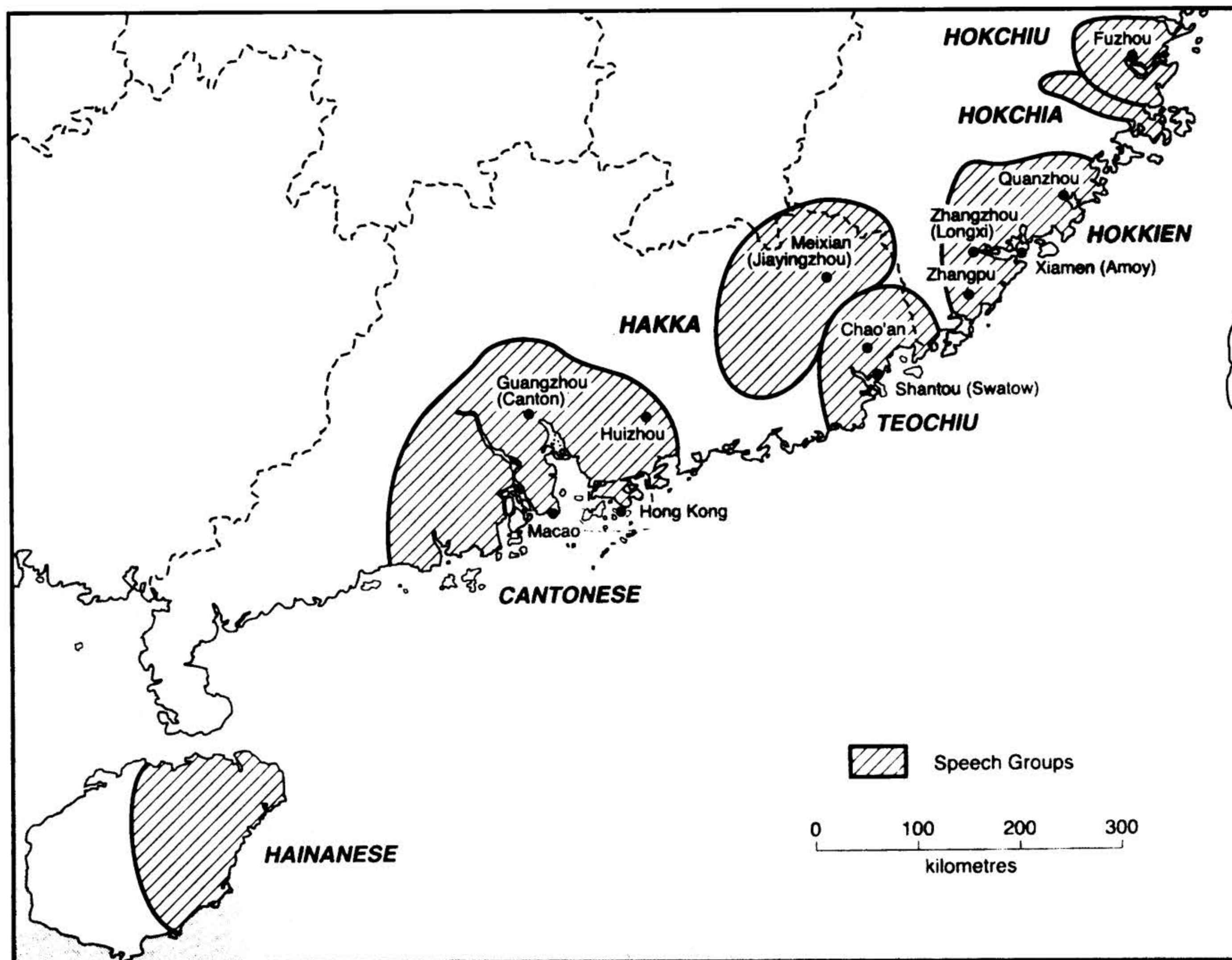
¹¹⁸ Cesar Adib Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1973), pp. 249–55, 347–52; Fairbank, *Chinese World Order*, p. 11; Ng Chin-keong, "The Case of Ch'en I-lao", pp. 391–93.

and Xiamen to European shipping in 1842 removed the remaining advantages of Chinese junks. The period that followed was one in which European ports and European shipping gained overwhelming dominance in the trade of the South China Sea. The final loss of political independence could not be long delayed thereafter.

The period 1880–1930 might be labelled the time of “colonial flood”, as millions of Chinese migrated temporarily into essentially dualistic societies that imposed very low demands for assimilation. Like all its predecessors, this period too came to an end, with the onset of the Great Depression, the Pacific War, political independence, and the Cold War. The larger pool below the tap did not dry up completely when contact between migrants and mother country was broken in 1949, but it spread so widely and thinly that it ceased to resemble the old pool of Chineseness at all.

If continuity exists in the story of Chinese-Southeast Asian interaction over the past seven centuries, it lies paradoxically in its discontinuity. No trend appeared to last more than a century before being reversed by a radically new situation. Peaceful private trade (usually regarded as improper in Beijing) and political intervention seldom moved in harmony, but were both subject to striking fits and starts. The settlement of people from China in Southeast Asia derived from both sources, but it came in a series of bursts, always followed by a calmer period when new Sino-Southeast Asian elites were formed by intermarriage and cultural adaptation. The spurts must all have been disturbing to indigenous populations, as economic and political relations were changed with each influx. Yet the long-term effects have been extraordinarily diverse and fruitful, as migrants experimented with new ways to survive and flourish, and societies developed new cultural and technological adaptations to Southeast Asia’s changing place in the world.





Map 3. Areas of emigration of Chinese dialect groups represented in Southeast Asia

Creolized Chinese Societies in Southeast Asia¹

G. William Skinner

The historical migration of Chinese to Southeast Asia has yielded a wondrous array of adaptive, acculturative, and assimilative phenomena. When approached with a judicious mix of social science and historical methods, the Nanyang becomes a virtual laboratory for studying the dialectics of ethnicity. I focus here on a particular type of ethnogenesis—at one time thought by anthropologists to be theoretically improbable, if not impossible²—namely, the creation through “fusion” of a new socio-cultural system that achieved autonomy and stability despite continued contact with both parent societies. In three distinct parts of Southeast Asia—the Philippines, Java, and the Straits Settlements of Malaya—such intermediate social systems evolved through the blending of indigenous and Chinese elements. As of the mid-nineteenth century, the Chinese Mestizos of the Philippines, the Chinese Peranakans of Java, and the Chinese Babas of Melaka (Malacca), Penang (Pinang), and Singapore in each case constituted a discrete and stable community alongside of, but

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 31st International Congress of Human Sciences in Asia and North Africa, Tokyo, September 1983. I have benefited from the critical comments of Benedict Anderson, James A. Fox, Eng Seng HO, Julia D. Howell, Susan Mann, Donald M. Nonini, Ellen Rafferty, TAN Chee Beng, Edgar Wickberg, and the late Michelle Rosaldo. I take sole responsibility for factual errors and faulty interpretations.

² A task force on acculturation working under the aegis of the Social Science Research Council once argued that “A real third system probably emerges only with the disappearance of the original through fusion in a given territory. . . . Fusion-producing forces which are strong enough to eventuate in a new and integral third system would appear to be sufficient to eliminate completely the autonomy of the parent systems. Put another way, the fusion either erases the essential outlines of both the merging cultures, or it produces no third culture with outlines clear enough to be maintained autonomously”. See “Acculturation: An Exploratory Formulation”, *American Anthropologist* 56 (1954), p. 988.

clearly distinguishable from, Chinese as well as indigenous society. In each instance the cultural mix of Chinese and indigenous elements had stabilized into a "tradition", and the language of daily use within the community—while clearly influenced by Chinese in grammar as well as lexicon—was an indigenous-based creole.³

My objectives in this paper are to sketch out the historical development of these three intermediate societies, characterize their creolized cultures as of the late nineteenth century, account for their limited occurrence in only certain regions of the Nanyang,⁴ trace their differential fates in the twentieth century, and explore some of the reasons for the differences.

The development of intermediate societies

The first step in the historical formation of these intermediate social systems had, of course, been the intermarriage of Chinese immigrants with indigenous women—but this phenomenon can hardly be viewed as anything exceptional in Southeast Asia. Prior to the late nineteenth century, women were simply not permitted to leave China, so that not only in the Philippines, Java, and Malaya but everywhere overseas, male immigrants necessarily turned to indigenous women. What was distinctive about developments in these three areas is that the offspring of these mixed alliances were not incorporated into indigenous society; they tended to avoid further intermarriage and to emphasize those aspects of their mixed heritage which served to set them apart from the mass of indigenes.

As the emergent intermediate communities took form, the descendants of successive waves of immigrants provided a continual supply of new recruits. Demographic processes were similar in all three cases. Chinese immigrants who remained overseas formed alliances with either locally born mestizo or indigenous women, but in either case the offspring were absorbed by the intermediate community. Mestizo men who did not marry within their own community took indigenes as wives, and their children, too, were absorbed into mestizo society.⁵ Finally, locally born mestizo

³ Penang was an exception. There the creole was based on Hokkien. See note 18 below.

⁴ It should be noted explicitly that small creolized communities of Chinese origin developed in a few Indonesian localities outside Java, most notably in Bangka and Bali, and in a few Malayan localities outside the former Straits Settlements, most notably in Kelantan. For a brief notice of such Indonesian cases see G. William Skinner, "The Chinese Minority" in *Indonesia*, ed. Ruth T. McVey (New Haven, Connecticut: HRAF Press, 1963), pp. 103–5. For detailed and sophisticated treatments of Kelantan cases see Roger Kershaw, "Towards a Theory of Peranakan Chinese Identity in an Outpost of Thai Buddhism", *JSS* 69 (1981), pp. 74–106; and Robert Winzeler, "The Ethnic Status of the Rural Chinese of the Kelantan Plain" in *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, Vol. 2, ed., L.A. Peter Gosling and Linda Y.C. Lim (Singapore: Maruzen Asia, 1983), pp. 34–55.

⁵ In his book *Straits Chinese Society* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1980), John R. Clammer has argued (p. 21) that "while early Chinese–Malay intermarriages did

women, in demand by both Chinese and mestizo men, seldom married indigenes. Thus, whereas few persons left the community from one generation to the next, there was a continual increment of new blood, both Chinese (via fathers) and indigenous (via mothers).⁶ Given these dynamics, intermediate creolized societies, once firmly established, were capable of quite rapid population growth. Moreover, these same dynamics ensured the growing prosperity of mestizo communities, for the wealth and property amassed by enterprising Chinese inevitably passed into the hands of mestizo heirs.

Intermediate creolized societies developed in Southeast Asia only after the establishment of European outposts. As is well known, the arrival of Europeans in the Nanyang brought new opportunities for the Chinese traders already active there, and sizeable Chinese settlements grew up in association with the fortified ports established by the Portuguese in Melaka, the Spanish in Manila, and the Dutch in Batavia. Mestizo children had appeared in these and other ports by the early seventeenth century, if not before, but incipient mestizo communities were repeatedly disrupted by the violent events that punctuated the seventeenth century and the first part of the eighteenth—not only sieges and rebellions but also expulsions

undoubtedly take place, they were in the very distant past, and intermarriage ceased, when it occurred at all, after one generation". He goes on to claim (p. 124) that "Baba men . . . either married within their own fairly balanced community or married Chinese girls . . .", who were assimilated to Baba society. These propositions strike me as untenable for any of the creolized societies under discussion, including the Melakan Babas that are the focus of Clammer's attention, prior to the twentieth century. It is well attested that Baba families brought in promising China-born sons-in-laws for many of their daughters, with the result that a sizeable proportion of Baba men had to take brides from outside their community. In the absence of marriageable Chinese girls, they necessarily turned to indigenes, not always Malay, of course. Moreover, long after the formation of an autonomous Baba society, Chinese immigrants continued to marry indigenous women, and their offspring were usually absorbed into Baba communities. A writer for the *Singapore Free Press* remarked in 1841: "Malayan women here intermarry with Chinese. . . . There is not, it is believed, any Chinese woman proper on the island . . ." (Quoted in Lim Joo Hock, "Chinese female immigration into the Straits Settlements, 1860–1901", *JSSS* 22 (1967), p. 61.)

J.D. Vaughan, describing the situation in Penang in the early 1850s, refers (in the present tense) to "half-caste Chinese, having Malay mothers", *The Manners and Customs of the Chinese of the Straits Settlements* (Singapore: Mission Press, 1879), p. 6. Given the nature of the marriage market, successful Baba families would almost invariably have taken Baba girls as brides for their sons; thus, Clammer may have been misled by his upper-class Baba informants.

⁶ There were, of course, exceptions to the general rule that, where intermediate creolized communities had formed, the descendants of immigrants were absorbed into them. One would expect some leakage among the less successful, within the lower classes, and generally in rural as against urban families. In particular, a lone Chinese (a shopkeeper, say) married to an indigenous woman and resident in her community often found it difficult to prevent the assimilation of his offspring to indigenous society, especially if the settlement was remote from urban centres and isolated from other Chinese families. More categorical exceptions include the following:

and massacres specifically directed against resident Chinese. Stable and continuous development of Chinese mestizo communities began in Melaka only after the Dutch conquest in 1641, in the Philippines only after the Spanish expulsion of "surplus" Chinese in 1686, and in Java only after the Chinese massacre of 1740 in Batavia and the violent events of 1741–42 in central Java.⁷

(1) A few local-born Chinese men, temperamentally unsuited to the competitive striving and work ethic of Chinese society, opted out by marrying uxorilocally into an indigenous family and adopting the native life style. Chinese informants described a number of such cases to me during fieldwork in Java in 1956–58. Cf. Giok-lan Tan, *The Chinese of Sukabumi: A Study in Social and Cultural Accommodation* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, Modern Indonesia Project, 1963), pp. 198–200.

(2) China-born men, imbued with the usual preference for sons, occasionally put daughters out for adoption by indigenous couples. The Malays of Singapore used a special term for adopted Chinese children, *anak beli*. Judith Djamour (*Malay Kinship and Marriage in Singapore* (London: Athlone Press, 1959), p. 98) reports that Chinese babies adopted by Malays were

"almost exclusively of the female sex; indeed not more than a handful of Chinese boys in the Island were known to have been adopted by Malays. . . . The price paid for an *anak beli*, a girl, varied between \$30 and \$100. Chinese girls were preferable [as adoptees] in two respects to Malay babies: (1) There was no fear or danger that the true parents would claim them back later. (2) The girls were much fairer in complexion than Malays, and the latter are extremely colour-conscious. There was no acculturation problem for Chinese girls since they were transferred in early infancy".

(3) When the union of a Chinese man and an indigenous woman was disrupted—whether by the man's return to China or through divorce or local separation—the sons usually went with the father while daughters remained with the mother, thereby ensuring an indigenous identification for the latter.

(4) There is some evidence that China-born fathers married to indigenous women may have been more diligent in ensuring that sons as opposed to daughters were reared as Chinese. Indeed, there may on occasion have been a prior understanding between an immigrant who intended to return to China and his local wife that she was free to rear her daughters as indigenes. I suggest that this is the critical dynamic underlying an intriguing pattern in early vital registration statistics for Chinese in Singapore (see Lim Joo Hock, "Chinese Female Immigration", Appendix 4, p. 100). During the first decade of registration, 1875–84, the sex ratio of registered Chinese births was 128.9 males per 100 females. Thereafter ratios steadily declined to 113.1 during 1896–1901. The initial male-heavy ratios may well reflect the fact that all the sons but only some of the daughters born to Chinese fathers were recorded as Chinese. The trend toward balanced ratios could result from the decline in the proportion of Chinese fathers whose wives were Malay rather than Baba or Chinese.

⁷ For relevant accounts of the Chinese during the early centuries, see Victor Purcell, "Chinese Settlement in Malacca", *JMBRAS* 20 (1947), pp. 115–125; Ch'en Ching-ho, *The Chinese Community in the Sixteenth Century Philippines* (Tokyo: Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1968); Milagros C. Guerrero, "The Chinese in the Philippines, 1570–1770" in *The Chinese in the Philippines, 1570–1770*, ed. Alphonso Felix, Jr (Manila: Solidaridad, 1966), pp. 15–39; Leonard Blussé, *Strange Company: Chinese Settlers, Mestizo Women, and the Dutch in VOC Batavia* (Dordrecht: Foris Publications, 1986), chaps 2–6.

In the Philippines, the population of China-born males rose to over twenty thousand at several junctures during the century and a half beginning in 1600, and by the time the Chinese migration wave began to recede in the mid-eighteenth century (in response to shifts in both Chinese and Spanish policy), the mestizo "residue" had outstripped the Chinese community and was sufficiently large in many towns to be separately organized.⁸ In the Manila area, separate *gremios* (autonomous corporate organizations with jurisdiction over communal affairs) had been established for Chinos (China-born Chinese), Mestizos, and Indios (indigenous Filipinos). In smaller towns Mestizo but not Chino *gremios* were found alongside *gremios* for indigenous townspeople. By 1810, the number of Chinese Mestizos had grown to over 120,000, some 4.8 per cent of the total Philippine population, as against only 7,000 Chinese. During the next 50 to 60 years, population growth of the Mestizos continued to outstrip that of the indigenes, and in 1877 Mestizos totalled some 290,000 or 5.2 per cent of the entire Philippine population; in the same year the China-born population stood at 23,000. The period from the 1740s to the 1850s saw a spectacular rise in the economic power and social standing of the Chinese Mestizos. By 1850 they dominated almost all branches of trade, controlled those industrial sectors important for commerce, and were the chief moneylenders and (after the Catholic Church) land investors in the countryside. In terms of social prestige, Chinese Mestizos ranked well below Spaniards but were very nearly on a par with Spanish Mestizos, who were far less numerous. Indeed, leading Indio families commonly sought to assimilate to Mestizo society.⁹

The counterpart communities that arose in Java were firmly established in north coast towns during the eighteenth century. While Chinese communities in Java go back many centuries earlier, the descendants of early immigrants for the most part became at least nominal Muslims and eventually assimilated to indigenous society.¹⁰ The last significant spate of

⁸ I rely here, of course, on the publications of Edgar Wickberg. See "The Chinese Mestizo in Philippine History", *JSEAH* 5 (1964), pp. 62-100, and *The Chinese in Philippine Life, 1850-1898* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1965), chaps 1, 2, and 5.

⁹ Contemporaneous sources noted that in certain areas of central Luzon everyone claimed to be a Mestizo even though this meant paying twice the tax. In José Rizal's novels Captain Tiago, a wealthy *indio cacique*, purchased for himself a place in the famous *Gremio de Mestizos de Binondo* (Wickberg, 1964 p. 187). Ironically, Rizal's own lineage provides an example of movement in the reverse direction. His paternal grandfather, a third-generation Chinese Mestizo, took legal steps to change his status to *Indio* (Wickberg, *Chinese in Philippine Life*, pp. 33-34).

¹⁰ See H.J. de Graaf and Th.G.Th. Pigeaud, *Chinese Muslims in Java in the 15th and 16th Centuries* (Melbourne: Monash University, 1984), pp. 172-75; Ong Tae-hae, *The Chinaman Abroad, or a Desultory Account of the Malayan Archipelago, Particularly of Java*, ed. and trans. W.H. Medhurst (Shanghai: Mission Press, 1849); Peter Carey,

conversions occurred among Chinese survivors of the 1740 massacre,¹¹ and thereafter non-Muslim Chinese Peranakan communities experienced steady growth and robust development all along the north coast. By the early nineteenth century, the Chinese quarters of Javan towns were dominated numerically, economically, and socially by the creolized Peranakans. The so-called "Chinese" officers through whom the Dutch indirectly ruled the "foreign-oriental" population were in fact Peranakan leaders. Nowhere, not even in Batavia, were the Chinese *per se* separately organized; unassimilated immigrants appeared everywhere as marginal to Peranakan society.¹²

At each step of the way, the Peranakan population of Java was somewhat smaller than the Mestizo population of the Philippines, but the pattern of growth was comparable during the nineteenth century. Peranakans totalled approximately 100,000 in 1810, 145,000 in 1860, 220,000 in 1890, and 250,000 by 1900.¹³ During the same century the far less numerous immigrant Chinese increased from roughly 8000 to 24,000. The economic roles of the Chinese Peranakans in Java were essentially similar to those of the Chinese Mestizos in the Philippines, and the Dutch no less than the Spaniards considered them essential to the colonial economy. If anything, the Peranakans achieved a heavier concentration of wealth and economic power than their Philippine counterparts; they formed, after all, a much smaller proportion of the total population—approximately 1 per cent in Java as against 5 per cent in the Philippines. In both legal status and general social standing, Peranakan society was intermediate between indigenous society and that of the Dutch and Dutch Eurasians.

In comparison with Java and the Philippines the three Malayan territories that in 1826 were conjoined to form the Straits Settlements appear minuscule. In 1678, the total population of Melaka, then a Dutch colony, was less than 5000, of whom some 850 lived in Chinese households. It

"Changing Javanese Perceptions of the Chinese Communities in Central Java, 1755–1825", *Indonesia* 37 (1984), pp. 7–8; The Siau-w Giap, "Religion and Overseas Chinese assimilation in Southeast Asian Countries", *Revue du sud-est asiatique*, 1965, pp. 67–83; Lance Castles, "The Ethnic Profile of Djakarta", *Indonesia* 3 (1967) p. 162. Among the earliest settlers were Chinese Muslims, most probably from Quanzhou. Wang Gungwu (*A Short History of the Nanyang Chinese* [Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 1959], p. 9) notes "the historical irony underlying the curious fact that Chinese who were Muslims should have been residing in parts of the Nanyang before the native peoples . . . had themselves been converted to Islam." De Graaf and Pigeaud (*Chinese Muslims*) suggest that during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Muslim Chinese played a role in converting Javanese to Islam.

¹¹ F. de Haan, *Oud Batavia*, 2nd ed. (Bandung: Nix, 1935), pp. 394–96.

¹² See Skinner, "Java's Chinese Minority: Continuity and Change", *JAS* 20 (1961), pp. 35–62.

¹³ These are my estimates, derived for the most part through extrapolations of census data. Most of the historical data are assembled in vol. 7 of the report on the 1930 census of the Dutch East Indies (*Volkstelling 1930*).

was in Melaka that Baba society first took shape, and it is notable that already in 1678, Chinese adult males were largely settled in domestic units, mostly with indigenous women, including slaves of Batak, Balinese, and Javanese origin.¹⁴ Approximately half of the Melaka Chinese lived in the city proper, for which we have a precise breakdown: 127 Chinese men (each heading a household), 140 women (presumably not enslaved), 93 adult male slaves, and 137 adult female slaves. Of the 219 children, 60 were the offspring of slaves, some presumably fathered by the Chinese household heads.¹⁵

Conditions in Melaka under the Dutch attracted few Chinese immigrants, so that the emergent creolized society had a long period of incubation with relatively little incorporation of new Chinese "blood". By 1750, the Chinese population of Melaka had increased to 2161, over one-fifth of the total population;¹⁶ the few China-born Chinese in this figure were essentially marginal to the established Baba community. In 1786 the British occupied Penang, which soon flourished at the expense of Melaka. In 1787 the founder of Penang, Francis Light, wrote: "Did not the Dutch keep a strict watch over the Chinese, most of them would leave Malacca".¹⁷ And, indeed, when the British captured Melaka in 1795, a sizeable contingent of Chinese Babas migrated to Penang. Only the preceding year, Light had noted of the Chinese settlers in Penang: "As soon as they acquire a little money they obtain a wife and go on in regular domestic mode to the end of their existence". These Hokkien settlers and the Baba immigrants from Melaka eventually formed a single intermediate society whose norms were, for the most part, set by the Babas but whose language was a creole based on Hokkien rather than Malay.¹⁸ Babas from Melaka also flocked to Singapore after that island was annexed by

¹⁴ Victor Purcell holds that most of the non-slave partners of the Chinese men were themselves originally slaves. In one publication (*The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, 2nd ed. [London: Oxford University Press, 1967], p. 241) he states that most of these women were Batak and Balinese, whereas in an earlier article (*Chinese Settlement in Malacca*, 1947, p. 125) he identifies them as Javanese and Malay. That a large proportion of the indigenous mothers of Babas were of Indonesian rather than Malay origin is indirectly confirmed by the fact that the Baba Malay word for "aunty" is *bibi*, commonly used today in Indonesia, rather than *macik*, the Malay equivalent. See TAN Chee Beng, *The Baba of Melaka: Culture and Identity of a Chinese Peranakan Community in Malaysia* (Selangor: Pelanduk Publications, 1988), p. 135.

¹⁵ These details are taken from the report of Governor Balthasar Bort, summarized in Purcell *The Chinese*, (1965), p. 241.

¹⁶ Purcell p. 242.

¹⁷ This quotation, from a letter dated 1 February 1787, and the following, from Light's letter of 25 January 1794, are taken from Purcell *The Chinese*, p. 244.

¹⁸ The linguistic difference between the Penang Babas and their Singapore counterparts stems not only from the fact that a settlement of married Hokkien speakers preceded the Baba immigration to Penang in contrast to Singapore, but also from the distinctive trading

the British in 1819. In this case they were the dominant group among the first Chinese settlers, and for two generations thereafter the Babas of Singapore were often referred to as Melakan Chinese.

Meanwhile, the Baba community in Melaka proper, depleted through emigration, had declined to no more than 1000 by the time of the first British census in 1817.¹⁹ In fact, in comparison with Penang and Singapore, Melaka saw little economic growth during most of the nineteenth century. By 1860 the Baba community in Melaka numbered approximately 6000 as against 4000 Chinese; in the 1880s the Baba population stabilized in the 7000 to 8000 range and that of the Chinese in the 10000 to 11000 range. By contrast, Penang and Singapore were attracting ever increasing numbers of migrants from China, and their Baba communities grew rapidly. In Penang, where Babas numbered fewer than 1000 in 1800, the community grew to nearly 9000 in 1851 and some 23,000 by 1891. In Singapore, where they numbered fewer than 1,000 in 1823, the Baba community grew to nearly 4500 in 1851 and approximately 16,000 by 1891.²⁰

Thus, in the 1890s Babas numbered between 45,000 and 50,000 throughout the Straits Settlements, accounting for 9 to 10 per cent of the total population. As with their counterparts in Java and the Philippines, they were predominantly traders and businessmen, and generally lacked the working-class elements heavily represented in the larger population of Chinese migrants. They were socially as well as economically supreme within the non-British sector of society. In the words of Maurice Freedman, "The dominance of Baba culture in the nineteenth century was due not simply to the passage of wealth from generation to generation, but also, and perhaps mainly, to the absorption of successful immigrants into Baba society".²¹ Early in this century a Western missionary characterized the Babas as "the most highly educated and most influential section of the Chinese community in the British possessions . . ." and noted that their

patterns of the two ports during the nineteenth century. Penang served as entrepôt for Medan in northeastern Sumatra and for Phuket in southern Thailand, and in both of those ports Hokkien speakers predominated among Chinese traders, whereas Singapore was the entrepôt for ports along the north coast of Java, where Peranakans predominated. There was considerable intermarriage of Penang Babas with Hokkien families in Sumatra and southern Thailand and of Singapore Babas with Peranakan families in Java. See Clammer 1980, p. 8.

¹⁹ Purcell *The Chinese*, (1965), p. 232.

²⁰ These estimates are based on population statistics by sex for all Chinese. I first estimated the proportion of female Chinese who were Baba on the basis of contemporaneous accounts and statistics on Chinese female immigrants, and then, assuming a balanced sex ratio within Baba society, apportioned the Chinese males accordingly between Baba and non-Baba.

²¹ Maurice Freedman, "Immigrants and Associations: Chinese in Nineteenth-Century Singapore", *CSSH* 3 (1960) p. 27.

creole was the "business language" not only in the Straits Settlements but in portions of the Federated Malay States as well.²²

Creolized cultures

Before attempting to explain why it was that intermediate Chinese societies arose only in particular regions within the Malaysian world and not elsewhere in Southeast Asia, I should like briefly to characterize the culture of these three societies at the time of their heyday—roughly 1850–70 in the case of the Philippine Mestizos, 1880–1900 in the case of the Malayan Babas, and 1890–1910 in the case of the Javan Peranakans. The members of each society spoke a distinctive language that most linguists would have no hesitation recognizing as a true creole; it was the mother tongue of all children born into the community.²³ The Chinese parent language in each case was Hokkien, the Southern Min language spoken in the Zhang-Quan region of Fujian, whence the great majority of Overseas Chinese traders originated in the seventeenth century.²⁴ The Austronesian parent language was Malay in the case of Baba creole and originally also in the case of Peranakan creole. However in Peranakan

²² William G. Shellabear, "Baba Malay: An introduction to the language of the Straits-born Chinese", *JSBRAS* 65 (1913), pp. 49–63.

²³ A creole language emerges when forms of speech that were native to no group of speakers become the basis for a mother tongue. It is possible that at least some of the creole languages of the intermediate societies treated here were nativized pidgins. In general, I subscribe to the position that linguistic creolization must be approached "within the framework of language change as merely one aspect of culture change arising out of culture contact". See Mervyn C. Alleyne, "Acculturation and the Cultural Matrix of Creolization" in *Pidginization and Creolization of Languages*, ed. Dell Hymes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971) p. 175.

²⁴ In reference to Malaya, Maurice Freedman makes an important point: "The syllable *ng*, *n*, or *m* which forms the first part of a number of kinship terms in Baba Malay is a version of *ng*, the vocative particle in the Changchow [Zhangzhou] subdialect of Hokkien; the earliest Hokkien emigration to Malaya being from the Changchow area, its speech determined the pattern of Hokkien words in the Baba language" ("Chinese Kinship and Marriage in Early Singapore", *JSEAH* 3 [1962], p. 68, reprinted in *The Study of Chinese Society*, ed. G. William Skinner [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979], pp. 87–88.) The same inference follows from the occurrence of *ng*, *n* or *m* in the kin terms for senior agnates in Peranakan and Mestizo creole. However, it is probably incorrect to conclude that the *earliest* Hokkien immigration to the regions in question was from Zhangzhou. In my interpretation, Zhangzhou Hokkiens came to predominate among overseas traders only in the regional cycle of development that began early in the sixteenth century. In the preceding cycle of development, in which Quanzhou served as metropolis of the southeast coast region, Quanzhou Hokkiens had dominated the overseas trade. The linguistic evidence suggests to me that the intermediate societies of the nineteenth-century *Nanyang* could have formed no earlier than the sixteenth century. See Skinner, "The Structure of Chinese History", *JAS* 44 (1985), pp. 276–78; and Ng Chin-keong, *Trade and Society: The Amoy Network on the China Coast, 1683–1735* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1983), pp. 11–12.

communities away from the north coast of Java, considerable relexification subsequently occurred, with Javanese, Sundanese, or Madurese words (depending on the region) being substituted for the Malay.²⁵ Far less is known about Philippine Mestizo creoles,²⁶ but the most likely scenario is that the creole spoken in the Manila area developed from a Hokkien-Tagalog pidgin; when Chinese mestizos from central Luzon settled in other islands of the Philippines, relexification occurred with substitutions from the local Philippine language for Tagalog words.

I may illustrate the nature of these creoles by reference to the Baba language of Melaka and Singapore. From Shellabear's account²⁷ it appears that in origin the lexicon was perhaps two-thirds Malay and

²⁵ The linguistic situation of Javan Peranakans is immensely complex, and the historical sequences of language use controversial. My reading of the evidence is that, during the nineteenth century, Javan Chinese-Malay (a true creole similar to Baba Malay) was the language of daily use within the Peranakan communities of the north coast, and that, during the 1920s and 30s, it was gradually displaced, as the language of the home and of all Peranakan gatherings, by Dutch among upper-class Peranakans and by Javan Malay among their lower-class counterparts. (Javan Malay, the street language of the cosmopolitan northcoast towns—variously dubbed “Omong Jawa”, “Melayoe Betawi”, and “Melajoe Rendah”—is a simplified, “low” Malay with a high proportion of foreign loan words.) After reviewing literary evidence from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Claudine Lombard-Salmon (“A Note on the So-called Sino-Malay Language” in *Literature in Malay by the Chinese of Indonesia: A Provisional Annotated Bibliography* [Paris: Editions de la Maison des sciences de l’homme, 1981]) concludes that “strictly speaking there was no Sino-Malay, but instead a Malay of Java spoken in the towns by all ethnic groups, whether Javanese, Dutch, or Chinese. . . .” However, the evidence she adduces relates solely to publications and hence to the “language of literacy”, to use Dédé Oetomo’s phrase. As Oetomo points out (“Multilingualism and Chinese Identities in Indonesia” in *Changing Identities of the Southeast Asian Chinese since World War II* [Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1988], p. 101), “in the latter half of the nineteenth century, more and more Chinese children were educated in Malay in private schools opened and run by Dutch missionaries and retired Dutch civil servants. The prestige and wide acceptance of this Western-style education explain the shift to Malay as a medium for the increasingly large body of literature written by Chinese”. It is hardly surprising that, having been schooled in “proper” Malay, Peranakan authors and journalists would write in it, the more so since they were striving to reach an audience beyond the Peranakan community.

²⁶ To the best of my knowledge, the Mestizo creole of the Philippines was a dying language already in the 1880s, and I doubt that it can be reconstructed from the speech of anyone still alive today. A nineteenth-century account by the founder of creole studies uses the term “Chinotagalospanische”. See Hugo Schuchardt, “Kreolische Studien IV, Ueber das Malaio-spanische der Philippinen”, *Sitzungsberichte der Philosophisch-historischen der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 105 (1884), p. 146. Frake’s treatment of Philippine Creole Spanish pays no heed to the language of the Chinese Mestizos, but it is just possible that as a result of Spanish relexification of Mestizo creole, the descendants of some Chinese Mestizos were assimilated to the speech community in which, say, Caviteño survives. See Charles O. Frake, “Lexical Origins and Semantic Structure in Philippine Creole Spanish” in Hymes, *Pidginization and Creolization* pp. 223–42.

²⁷ Shellabear, “Baba Nalay”.

one-fifth Hokkien Chinese, the remainder being Dutch, Portuguese, English, Tamil, and assorted Indonesian languages. The Malay base was itself distinctive in many ways, including a number of regular phonological transformations.²⁸ Compare, for instance, *Baba keré* ("hard") and *pané* ("hot") with *keras* and *panas* in standard Malay; *tiké* ("mat") and *puté* ("rotate") with *tikar* and *putar*; and *kalo* ("if") and *hijo* ("green") with *kalau* and *hijau*.²⁹ The prefixes and suffixes of other Malay dialects had largely been dropped from Baba speech, a simplification of Malay syntactic structure that reflects the uninflected Hokkien syntax. Naturally enough, words of Hokkien origin were concentrated in certain domains, most notably religious, business, and household affairs, and in general, words whose referents are uniquely Chinese tended to be of Hokkien origin. The Hokkien derived *gua* and *lu* were used for "I" and "you", whereas the third-person pronoun was taken from Malay. Words of Hokkien origin were pronounced (without tones, of course) with Malay phonemes. Several features of Baba syntax clearly derive from Hokkien. For instance, in Baba speech the demonstrative precedes the noun as in Hokkien, whereas in Malay it follows. Thus, *itu buku* ("that book") and *ini hari* ("today") in Baba Malay, but *buku itu* and *hari ini* in other varieties of Malay. Another telling example concerns possessive syntax: in Hokkien, the construction glossed "his room" corresponds to "he" followed by a possessive particle plus "room"; the word order in Baba speech is identical: *dia* ("he") *punya* ("possess", used as a possessive particle) *bilik* ("room"). The phrase *dia punya bilik* contrasts sharply with *bilik dia* or *biliknya* in standard Malay.³⁰

²⁸ The examples in the remainder of this paragraph are taken from Tan Chee Beng's more systematic analysis (Tan, *Baba of Melaka*, chap. 4).

²⁹ In addition to systematic transformations of this kind, the Baba language was replete with distinctive lexical simplifications and corruptions of Malay terms.

³⁰ In Java, north coast Peranakan creole was referred to in all languages as the equivalent of "Chinese Malay". During my fieldwork in Java, 1956–58, I interviewed a number of older Peranakans concerning marriage and family customs at the time of their youth. In Rembang and Tuban (small north coast ports whose fortunes had declined as sea-going trade became increasingly concentrated at the large, modern ports of Surabaya and Semarang) I found that virtually all female informants over the age of sixty still spoke the old creole. Although the lexical mix was distinctive—more Javanese and Dutch loan words, for instance—and the phonological shifts differed in details, the Peranakan creole they spoke resembled Baba Malay in the range of Hokkien-derived terms and in its retention of selected Hokkien syntactic structures. They used the same peculiar mix of personal pronouns: the Hokkien-derived *gua* and *lu* for the first and second person, but *dia* for the third. Outside the north coast towns (roughly from Batavia to Gresik), the indigenous base of Peranakan speech appears to have been Javanese, Sundanese, or Madurese rather than Malay. Cf. Oetomo 1988 "Multilingualism". Oetomo argues that with the rise of Malay-language schooling for Peranakans in the late nineteenth century, the language of intimacy for those residing in the interior shifted from a regional Javan language to Malay.

In the basic subsistence realms of food, clothing, and housing, the cultures of all three intermediate societies could fairly be described as creolized.³¹ The cuisine included not only Chinese dishes and indigenous dishes, usually called by names derived respectively from Hokkien and the relevant native language, but also a number of specially designated dishes unknown to either Hokkien Chinese or indigenes. Modes of attire varied markedly from one area to another and fashions changed over time, but in the nineteenth century, at least, the clothing of both men and women in each of the three intermediate societies was distinctive.³² Baba women had basically two modes of attire, one the *koon* and *sah* of Chinese origin, the other the *baju kurung* and *batik* of indigenous origin, but the material, the details of cut and fashion, and above all the accessories rendered Baba women always readily distinguishable from either Chinese or Malay.³³ Peranakan, Baba, and Mestizo houses dating from the mid-nineteenth century and earlier typically conformed to a modified Chinese plan, with a central court.³⁴

In many elements of kinship structure, the emphasis had shifted away from the patrilineal, virilocal, and patriarchal bias that was basic to the

³¹ One procedure for reconstructing the culture of Babas and Peranakans in the nineteenth century is to use information derived from archival and other contemporary documentary sources to inform the interviewing of older informants born into Baba and Peranakan families. A particularly valuable document in this regard is an unpublished work by Rosie TAN Kim Neo: "The Straits Chinese in Singapore" (Unpublished senior thesis in Social Studies, University of Malaya, 1958). For an admirable anthropological analysis of the Baba Chinese, see TAN Chee Beng, *Baba of Melaka*. For a sensitive account of Baba culture in Penang, see Eng Heng HO, "Baba Identity in Penang" (Unpublished senior thesis in Anthropology, Stanford University, 1985), chap. 4. For a full-scale ethnography of a Peranakan Chinese community, see Giok-lan TAN, *Chinese of Sukabumi: A Study in Social and Cultural Accommodation*; her concerns, however, did not extend to reconstruction. I have made no serious effort to reconstruct Philippine Mestizo culture. Wickberg (*Chinese in Philippine Life*, p. 31) tells us only that it was "a blend of Chinese, Spanish, and Indio culture".

³² Rosie Tan ("Straits Chinese", chap. 5) reconstructs Baba attire prior to the fashion changes of the 1920s. For a detailed description of Peranakan attire in the 1950s see Giok-lan Tan, *Chinese of Sukabumi* pp. 48–51. Wickberg (*Chinese in Philippine Life*, pp. 180 ff.) reproduces a number of engravings from a French work (Jean Mallat de Bassilan, *Les Philippines* [Paris, 1846]) depicting the demeanour and attire of various ethnic groups in the Philippines as of mid-century. While one is hard put to detect any Chinese influence in the depicted attire of Chinese Mestizos, it is clearly distinguishable, for both men and women, from the similar costumes of Spanish mestizos.

³³ Rosie Tan, "Straits Chinese", chap. 5.

³⁴ I have observed such houses in the Manila area, in Singapore and Penang, and in a dozen different towns along the north coast of Java. Shellabear, ("Baba Malay," p. 55) notes that since the construction of Baba houses is basically Chinese in plan, the Babas "have given Chinese names to the different parts of the house". Terms derived from Hokkien were used for the reception room, the open courtyard, the upper floor, the inside balcony, the bedroom, the outer balcony open to the sky, etc.

traditional Hokkien system.³⁵ Chinese surnames were retained in all three intermediate societies, along with surname exogamy.³⁶ But apart from this survival, the kinship systems had become essentially bilateral rather than patrilineal. The localized patrilineage of the Hokkien Chinese had disappeared, and in its place a bilateral kindred was evident during rites of passage. There was a distinct tendency in the ancestral cult to worship the lineal ascendants of the mother as well as of the father. Weddings might be held, and the bridal chamber prepared, in the parental home of the bride as well as of the groom. Uxorilocal marital residence, everywhere wholly acceptable, was the preferred form in the Straits Settlements, most of eastern Java, and certain regions of the Philippines.³⁷ Daughters inherited along with sons, and in particular the inheritance of real property tended to follow marital residence. Kinship terms for senior relatives were for the most part derived from the Hokkien, those for junior

³⁵ See Freedman, "Chinese Kinship", TAN Chee Beng, *Baba of Melaka* pp. 180–192; Rosie TAN, "Straits Chinese", chap. 2; Eng Heng HO, "Baba Identity", pp. 59–70. I also draw on an unpublished manuscript of my own: "Chinese Kinship Change in Java", 1958.

³⁶ Wickberg (*Chinese in Philippine Life*, p. 32) discusses a peculiar development with respect to Mestizo surnames. It was common practice, he says, "to create a new Filipino surname by combining parts of the full name of the Chinese parent. Thus, where the name of the Chinese was Yap Tin-Chay, the mestizo descendants might choose to create a new surname, Yaptinchay, for themselves. Or, if Yap Tin-chay had been popularly known as Yap Tinco, using the Hokkien polite suffix *k'o* with his personal name, the new surname might be Yaptinco". My understanding, however, and the context of Wickberg's description would seem to support it, is that the construction of such "Filipino" surnames became fashionable only near the end of the nineteenth century when Mestizos and Indios were already effecting the fateful merger that yielded twentieth-century Filipino society. When Mestizos began tampering with their surnames, it signalled, or so it seems to me, the impending demise of their creolized culture. Although assimilating Sino-Thai still prefer the customary practice of adopting a Sanskritized Thai surname, some have created surnames based on the full name of their Chinese immigrant ancestor. The practice is not unknown among Javan Peranakans; the full significance of such a move (not to mention the adoption of fully Javanese names) is not yet clear; one obvious consequence is the loss of surname exogamy.

³⁷ Uxorilocal marriage (whereby the groom moves as a son-in-law into the family of the bride's parents) was the usual means for absorbing China-born immigrants into Baba (and Peranakan and Mestizo) families. John Clammer's explanation of Baba uxori-locality (*Straits Chinese Society*, chap. 3) emphasizes this point to the exclusion of any indigenous influence. However, my research in Java showed that the particular variant of marital residence considered normative by Peranakans (ambilocal, uxori-ambilocal, uxorilocal, etc.) varied from one region to another in suspiciously close accordance with indigenous custom. My own reconstruction of the development of Peranakan kinship considers not only the need to incorporate China-born sons-in-law, but also the enhanced power and autonomy of Peranakan as against Hokkien women, the strategic concerns of family heads in an environment lacking organized lineages, and the role of Javanese culture as a storehouse of ready-made solutions that could be drawn upon by the Peranakans as new problems arose (Skinner "Chinese Kinship Change").

relatives from indigenous terminology. But the terminological *system* was a distinctive combination of Hokkien and indigenous patterns.³⁸

Religious culture among Babas and Peranakans was a fairly direct derivative of Hokkien practices.³⁹ The chief departures relate to the altered kinship system (e.g. the bilateralization of mourning customs), the incorporation of indigenous curing rituals, and the assimilation of local saints as objects of worship. Philippine Mestizos were generally Catholic, as we shall see below, but Chinese elements had long been incorporated in the manner made familiar to us by folk Catholicism elsewhere. A very popular mestizo cult was that identifying the Virgin of Antipolo, a protector of travellers, with Mazu, the patron deity of Hokkiens in general and of seafarers in particular. Religious processions in connection with feast days were regularly punctuated by fireworks in traditional Chinese fashion and accompanied by a band playing Chinese instruments.⁴⁰

This brief notice of selected elements of Baba, Peranakan, and Mestizo cultures must suffice to suggest their peculiarly creolized character. It should be clear that the cultural mix was creatively distinctive rather than random, and that the whole had cohered into a stable tradition with an integrity and dynamic of its own.

Why these three and not others?

I have argued that critical to the formation of these three intermediate societies was the fact that offspring of Chinese fathers, whether by part-Chinese or indigenous mothers, were normally not absorbed by indigenous society. By comparison, in Thailand and Cambodia—I single out the cases that stand in sharpest contrast—obstacles to assimilation on the part of the progeny of mixed marriages were either absent or so weak that full incorporation into indigenous society occurred before any intermediate system could be stabilized. As a result, for the descendants of a mid-nineteenth-century immigrant, assimilation proceeded step-by-step in tandem with acculturation until—usually within two generations—the descendants *were* Thai or Cambodian, as the case may be.⁴¹ In the other

³⁸ See Giok-lan Tan (*Chinese of Sukabumi*, chap. 4) for a comprehensive and fully professional treatment of Peranakan family and kinship. There, *inter alia*, the terminological systems of Hokkiens, Peranakans, and Sundanese are systematically compared. For Baba kinship terminology, see Tan Chee Beng, *Baba of Melaka*, Appendix 1.

³⁹ See Rosie Tan, "Straits Chinese", chap. 8; Giok-lan Tan, *Chinese of Sukabumi*, chap. 5; Tan Chee Beng, *Baba of Malaka*, chaps. 6 and 7; Clammer, chap. 4.

⁴⁰ Wickberg, *Chinese in Philippine Life*, p. 193.

⁴¹ Skinner, *Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1957); Skinner, "Change and Persistence in Chinese Culture Overseas: A Comparison of Thailand and Java", *JSSS* 16 (1960), pp. 86–100; Skinner, "The Thailand

set of countries, however, while acculturation and assimilation also occurred at a brisk rate at mid-century, descendants of a Chinese immigrant acculturated not to the indigenous way of life but to the now stable culture of the Mestizos, Peranakans, or Babas, and they moved not into indigenous society but into the intermediate "third social system", where assimilation to indigenous society was inhibited.

A variety of factors must be investigated in any attempt to account for the sharp difference in this respect between our two sets of societies. The logical starting place in such an inquiry is to note features common to one set but absent in the other. One such contrast concerns the speech group or ethnicity of the Chinese immigrants. To our knowledge, only Hokkiens figured among the original Chinese ancestors of the creolized societies in question, and, as of the mid-nineteenth century, the overwhelming majority of Chinese in each of the three countries where "third systems" developed were Hokkiens. By contrast, in Thailand and Cambodia Hokkiens were easily outnumbered by other speech groups within the Chinese population. The hypothesis implicit in this contrast, however, does not hold up. To begin with, throughout the Ming period and well into the Qing, Hokkiens were dominant among Overseas Chinese throughout the Nanyang; the contrast, then, did not obtain in the period when these intermediate societies were being formed. Moreover, although the Chinese population of Burma remains predominantly Hokkien to this day, no intermediate society ever developed there, and assimilation patterns have closely resembled those obtaining in Thailand and Cambodia.⁴² As it turns out, not only ethnicity but also other differences among the immigrant Chinese are of little importance in accounting for the contrasting sociocultural dynamics. For explanations we must look to differences among the receiving societies themselves.

We may note first a broad but very significant contrast. The two societies in which Chinese assimilation was rapid and uncomplicated were traditional agrarian civilizations whose political structures and stratification systems were intact, whereas in each of the three regions where intermediate systems developed indigenous society was "truncated" in one way or another. The two arguments suggested by this contrast assume that Chinese immigrants and their descendants resisted assimilation when it was equated with downward mobility but not when it accompanied upward mobility. One argument stresses the overwhelming power of the indigenous ruling class in Thailand and Cambodia. Chinese striving to

Chinese: Assimilation in a Changing Society", *Asia* 2 (1964), pp. 80-92; William E. Willmott, *The Chinese in Cambodia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Publications Centre, 1967).

⁴² This argument and certain others in this section were originally set forth in Skinner, "Change and Persistence".

get ahead adopted indigenous ways to facilitate obtaining from the indigenous elite the economic concessions and political protection needed to prosper and preserve their accumulated property. The other argument stresses the exalted status of the Thai and Cambodian elites. When the rulers of high civilizations enjoyed undiminished prestige, indigenous status *per se* could not have been perceived by immigrants as degrading. Thus, aspiration to high social status inevitably sweetened the prospect of complete acculturation and assimilation. The validity of both arguments has been well established for Thailand as well as Cambodia,⁴³ and there is nothing in the record of other precolonial civilizations in Southeast Asia to deny their force.

In the three areas where intermediate societies did develop, the evaluation of indigenous status was inevitably depressed by the absence of indigenes whose power and status were unequivocally superior. A true elite had been absent from the very beginning in the Philippines, where "high" civilization had been merely incipient at the time of the Spanish occupation. In the case of Melaka, the Malay sultan and his court were driven out at the time of the Portuguese conquest (1511) and never restored under subsequent Dutch and British administration. As for Penang and Singapore, both were detached from their respective Malay domains at the onset of British rule. The case of Java is rather more complex, and it allows us to test the force of the proposition under consideration by varying time as well as space. In the seventeenth century, most of Java was under the control of the great Kingdom of Mataram, whose ruling strata were in no sense less powerful or exalted than comparable elite groups in Thailand and Cambodia. Dutch power, first established in 1619 at Batavia, encroached only gradually on the Javanese courts. My argument is therefore supported in a rather elaborate way by evidence which suggests (1) that the complete assimilation of the descendants of Chinese immigrants into Javanese society—and especially into its elite strata—was not uncommon prior to the mid-eighteenth century; (2) that Peranakan communities were first stabilized in north coast towns only after these towns had been isolated from the royal court(s) and their local rulers humbled, subjected, or deposed by the Dutch; (3) that rates of Chinese assimilation into the Javanese elite steadily declined for Java as a whole during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries;⁴⁴ and (4) that at any given

⁴³ Skinner, *Chinese Society in Thailand*, chap. 3, section D, and chap. 4, section C; W.E. Willmott, *Chinese in Cambodia*, chap. 2. Lee Poh Ping makes the valid point that my 1960 article "Change and Persistence" slights the first (political economy) argument, but it is, of course, a major theme of my 1957 book. See Lee Poh Ping, *Chinese Society in Nineteenth Century Singapore* (Kuala Lumpur: OUP, 1978), pp. 4–5.

⁴⁴ Peter Carey ("Changing Javanese Perceptions", p. 41) argues persuasively that the Java War of 1825 and its immediate antecedents marked a watershed in the relations between

point in time during those two centuries assimilation rates tended to be lower in the areas of Java directly administered by the Dutch than in the indirectly ruled principalities of central Java, where the traditional Javanese elite retained considerable prestige and formal power.⁴⁵

Of course, nowhere in Southeast Asia were the Chinese positioned to pursue their family strategies or communal goals without constraints. The various receiving societies were characterized by distinctive political and legal systems, and for the most part their regimes developed proactive policies directed specifically at resident Chinese. The immediate issue here is the extent to which legal and policy differences between these two sets of countries served to prevent or limit the absorption of local-born Chinese by indigenous society. We may begin with the Philippines and Java.

Spanish authorities classified the tribute-paying population of the Philippines into three classes: Chinos or Sangleys (China-born Chinese), Chinese Mestizos, and Indios (the Malayan indigenes).⁴⁶ Indios were subject to corvée and paid a small head tax; Mestizos had similar corvée obligations but paid a head tax that was twice as high; Chinos were exempt from corvée but subject to more and much heavier taxation. While the geographic mobility of *Chinos* was always restricted in one way or another, Mestizos were as free as Indios to change residence. Nevertheless, the full legal privileges and protections extended to Mestizos could be enjoyed only through affiliation with one of the *Gremios de Mestizos*; these communal organizations were typically headquartered in Mestizo towns or neighbourhoods that also supported a specifically Mestizo church. Major urban centres supported separate *gremios* for each of the three ethnic communities. Sumptuary laws also drew distinctions, but in practice they did not require Mestizos to retain specifically Chinese elements of attire.

Chinese and Javanese communities: "The Chinese themselves became ever more conscious of their exposed and vulnerable position in Javanese society. The option of assimilation into the Javanese world now appeared much less attractive". According to The Siau-w Giap ("Overseas Chinese Assimilation", p. 79), "the social distance between Chinese and Javanese" was widened still further "towards the end of the nineteenth century".

⁴⁵ Peter Carey ("Changing Javanese Perceptions", pp. 18–21) discusses the close personal and social ties between Peranakan Chinese and the Javanese elites of Surakarta and Yogyakarta during the first decade of the nineteenth century. Takashi Shiraishi (*An Age in Motion: Popular Radicalism in Java, 1912–1926* [Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990], p. 7) describes the mid-century development in Surakarta of "an Indo-Javanese-Chinese community" that loved and patronized Javanese literature.

⁴⁶ This summary is based primarily on Wickberg, "Chinese Mestizo". See also Wickberg, *Chinese in Philippine Life*; Milagros G. Guerrero, "The Political Background" in *The Chinese in the Philippines*, Vol. 2 ed., Alfonso Felix, Jr (Manila: Solidaridad, 1969), pp. 15–39; and Jesus Merino, "The Chinese Mestizo: General Consideration" in *The Chinese in the Philippines*, II: pp. 45–66.

The reproduction of distinctions among the three ethnic classes was provided for by Spanish legislation. The son of a Chinese father by an India or Mestiza mother was classed as a Chinese Mestizo, as were male descendants in perpetuity.⁴⁷ A Mestiza marrying a Chino or Mestizo also remained in the Mestizo category, along with her children. However, in marrying an Indio (presumably rare because of the implied downward mobility) she and her children left the Mestizo status group. An individual dispensation was required to change one's ethnic status, other than (in the case of women only) by marriage. Early in the nineteenth century new legislation served to discourage Mestizo-Indio intermarriage.⁴⁸

The Chinese of Java were given a distinct legal status and subjected to specific taxes and restrictions under the Dutch East India Company era (i.e. during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries), but it was only after the Indies came under direct colonial rule that their legal position was systematized and codified in detail. As in the Philippines, the non-European population was classified into discrete ethnic classes, but in Java there were only two: "foreign orientals" and "natives" (*inlanders*). While Chinese were classed along with immigrant Arabs and Indians (and their descendants) in an omnibus category, in practice a distinctive body of law and legal procedures evolved for the Chinese alone.⁴⁹ From 1824 on, Chinese involved in both civil and criminal cases were tried in native courts. In 1855, however, Dutch business law was applied to the Chinese (at the insistence of Dutch merchants), so that most civil cases came to be tried in European courts. Domestic law—family law in particular—remained under the jurisdiction of Chinese officers, appointed by and beholden to the colonial government, who served as the legal guardians of orphaned Chinese and were responsible for the legal disposition of Chinese estates. The power of the Chinese officers was strengthened during the nineteenth century, and in the major cities they maintained a separate police force that investigated crimes involving Chinese and pursued violators of Chinese-run monopoly farms. Unlike natives, Chinese were directly taxed, paying *inter alia* a 4 per cent levy on income.⁵⁰

It is notable that no distinction whatsoever was made between Peranakan Chinese and China-born immigrants; they were as one before the law. However, the line between foreign orientals and natives was drawn far more sharply than during the preceding Company period. A bellwether

⁴⁷ The legal case translated as Appendix One in Felix, *The Chinese in the Philippines*, II specifies (p. 153) that a decree dated 2 May 1786 provided that the children of Chinese were to be considered Chinese Mestizos.

⁴⁸ Wickberg, "Chinese Mestizo", p. 69, n. 8.

⁴⁹ A summary is provided in Purcell, *The Chinese*, pp. 435–437.

⁵⁰ James R. Rush, *Opium to Java: Revenue Farming and Chinese Enterprise in Colonial Indonesia, 1860–1910* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 87.

case in 1804 was precipitated by the chance discovery that one of the wards of a semiofficial Chinese charitable agency had converted to Islam. Characterizing this "misstep" as disobedience to his guardians, the agency authorities, with government approval, ordered him to "return to Chinese religion" and meted out appropriate punishment.⁵¹ Since both Chinese and Dutch were represented on the agency's board, the decision most likely reflected not only the changing attitudes of Peranakans but also the more intense concern of Dutch authorities to reinforce the legal distinctions of race. At various times during the nineteenth century, Dutch authorities were concerned that Chinese were "going native" to escape taxation, that Chinese would cut into Dutch profits from exploiting Javanese peasants, and that Chinese might contaminate the natives with advanced or seditious ideas that threatened colonial rule, but the net common effect was to motivate the careful enforcement of legal distinctions. Although sumptuary laws had been considerably reduced in scope since the eighteenth century,⁵² they nonetheless served to sharpen the cultural divide between Peranakan Chinese and Javanese. In the words of an 1872 statute, it was illegal "to appear in public attired in any manner other than that of one's own ethnic group".⁵³ In practice, this meant that Peranakan men were constrained to retain the queue and to dress in mainland Chinese style. (The "customary attire" of "Chinese" women was, of course, the creolized style of Peranakans: no one would have thought to enforce locally the attire of Chinese women, few of whom had ever been seen in Java.)

In the early 1830s, as a complement to the Cultivation System, the Dutch authorities introduced in Java regulations that confined Chinese to designated quarters and required short-term passes to travel outside them. Designed to restrict Chinese economic activity in the interior, this "pass-and-quarter system", on the face of it, restricted Peranakan freedom of movement far more sharply than any comparable policies directed against Mestizos in the Spanish Philippines. Nonetheless, it failed in its objectives, and during the next fifty years Chinese penetration of towns and villages in Java was no less marked than the contemporaneous process in the Philippines. On the one hand, designated Chinese quarters proliferated throughout Java after 1830, and, on the other, as James Rush has

⁵¹ The agency in question was the Boedelmeesteren of Batavia. See The Siauw Giap, "Overseas Chinese Assimilation", pp. 78-79.

⁵² The elaboration of sumptuary laws under the Dutch East India Company reached a convoluted climax in 1754 with Jacob Mosel's code, which, incidentally, permitted Chinese officers the privilege of a parasol carried by a slave. See Jean Gelman Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia: European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, pp. 66-69). Mosel's code was revoked in 1795, but, once Napoleonic influence had waned, new, more modest regulations were adopted by the colonial government.

⁵³ Rush, *Opium to Java*, p. 14.

convincingly demonstrated, the Dutch required only token compliance from revenue farms, which thus "became the major vehicle by which Chinese merchants tapped Java's rural markets".⁵⁴ In any case, the assimilation effects of the pass-and-quarter system are moot; on balance, it may have fostered exploitative economic relations between Peranakans and Javans even as it inhibited more egalitarian neighbourly relations across the racial divide.

Despite significant differences (of which more below), the Spanish in the Philippines and the Dutch in Java both drew a sharp line in colonial law between the creolized Chinese community and indigenous society, and both discouraged assimilation across that legally defined racial divide. In general (the only notable exception being marriage by Mestizas to Indios), institutionalized procedures for crossing over were absent. In this respect, Thailand offers a clear contrast. It is true, of course, that the Chinese community in Thailand was administered by Chinese headmen whose role paralleled that of Chinese officers in Java; both sets of leaders held official titles from the government and were responsible for social order within the Chinese community. In Thailand, too, Chinese were sharply distinguished administratively and legally from the indigines. But in Thailand, by contrast with Java or the Philippines, a local-born man of Chinese descent had a choice. On reaching maturity, he was free to identify as either Chinese or Thai: he could choose either to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the Chinese headman or to establish client relations with a Thai patron. This choice carried with it full legal identification as either Thai or Chinese. If he placed himself under the Chinese headman, then he wore a queue, paid the Chinese triennial head tax, and was accordingly marked on the wrist; if he became the client of a Thai patron, then he clipped his hair in the Thai style, was tattooed, and entered one of the Thai *corvée* cohorts.⁵⁵ But in Java and the Philippines, no such choice was open to local-born Chinese. If he was the recognized child of a Chinese father, he was by legal definition a Mestizo in the Philippines and a "foreign oriental" in Java.

The legal situation in the Straits Settlements was less cut and dried. Like the Dutch, the British were obsessed with the racial distinction between Chinese and natives. An immigrant from Sumatra became a "native" on setting foot in Melaka, but a Baba whose family had been resident there for generations could not be counted a native so long as he maintained his Chinese name and eschewed Islam. Nonetheless, persons born in the Straits were British subjects regardless of race; there were no restrictions on residence or travel within the colony, and no regulations

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 88.

⁵⁵ Skinner, *Chinese Society in Thailand*, chap. 4, section A.

to discourage commingling of the races. The guiding legal philosophy was expressed clearly enough by the Penang Charter of Justice of 1807, which "secures to all the native inhabitants the free exercise of their religion, indulges them in all their prejudices, pays the most scrupulous attention to their ancient usages and habits".⁵⁶ As these words might be said to foretell, colonial law developed in such a way that Malays were identified with Islam and Chinese with Chinese religion. Islamic family law became established almost in its entirety in the Straits Settlements, while for the Chinese a discrete system of family law evolved that was, in Maurice Freedman's words, "*sui generis*, being in part Chinese, in part English, and altogether odd".⁵⁷ Thus, colonial law may have fostered the conception of Islam as a primordial essence of Malayness such that *masuk Melayu* ("to become Malay") came to imply conversion to Islam. At the same time, Straits law unambiguously considered Babas to be Chinese. One might conclude, then, that colonial law subtly encouraged Babas to view Chinese religion as essential to their identity and to resist conversion to Islam.

But just how much weight should one give to government policy—to divide-and-rule stratagems and legal options? In the Straits Settlements as in Thailand, there were no legal obstacles to the assimilation of local-born Chinese to indigenous society; yet outcomes diverged. In the Straits as in Java, despite contrasting legal systems and policies, outcomes converged: both Babas and Peranakans alike actively resisted assimilation during the nineteenth century. Or was it simply conversion to Islam that they resisted? Clearly, a closer look at religion is in order. What role did it play in the formation and perpetuation of intermediate systems in Southeast Asia?

The very nature of the several religions involved suggests that, insofar as adoption of the indigenous religious system is a necessary part of assimilation and/or acculturation, Islam and to a lesser extent Christianity would be inhibitory whereas Theravada Buddhism would not. Among the considerations underlying this formulation are the following: (1) Islam and Christianity are exclusivist, monotheistic religions requiring the renunciation of false gods, whereas Theravada Buddhism is not only more permissive and pantheistic in spirit but also remarkably tolerant, in practice, of animistic survivals. In spirit and form, then, the folk religion carried by Chinese immigrants—polytheistic, eclectic, pervaded by animism—is relatively congenial to the total religious system of Theravada

⁵⁶ Quoted in Maurice Freedman, "Chinese law in Singapore: The Rout of Custom" in *Family Law in Asia and Africa*, ed. J.N.D. Anderson (London: Allen & Unwin, 1968) pp. 49–72; reprinted in Skinner, *The Study of Chinese Society*, pp. 140–160. The quotation is from p. 141 of the reprint.

⁵⁷ Freedman, p. 140.



Figure 3. Chinese were prominent organizing gambling games in Siam, as shown in this nineteenth century scene. *Dhonburi Mural Painting*, Preecha Kanchanakom, Sinchai Krabuansaeng, Marut Amranondha, Kamol Chayawatana (Bangkok: The Society for the Conservation of National Art Treasures and Environment, 1980)

Buddhists but antithetical to that of orthodox Christians and Muslims. (2) Since the Chinese folk religion has drawn heavily on Mahayana Buddhism, it also manifests a substantive overlap with Theravada Buddhism. (3) The process of becoming a Muslim or a Christian, a decisive step, requires in the initial stages submission to a conversion ritual that, in the case of Islam with its requirement of circumcision, is somewhat forbidding. In either case, conversion is a *rite de passage* that marks the convert's incorporation into the body of believers and thus carries profound social implications. By contrast, in becoming a Buddhist there is not only no formal commitment—no “decision for Buddha”—but also nothing in the early stages that could be described as a decisive step or rite of passage. It is quite possible to slip gradually into the ways of the faithful without ever exercising the conscious will or experiencing deprivation. (4) Closely related is the fact that becoming a Muslim or Christian entails at an early stage abrupt discontinuities of behaviour—withdrawal from the ancestral cult, for instance, and in the case of Islam, renunciation of pork—that are not lightly countenanced by Chinese. By contrast, becoming a Buddhist would appear to involve discontinuities that are only gradual and in any case become necessary only at later stages in the acculturation process.

It is safe to conclude, I believe, that, at the very least, Theravada Buddhism raises no barrier to assimilation, for the descendants of Chinese have assimilated at a relatively rapid rate in every one of the Theravada Buddhist countries. The case of Vietnam, however, serves to weaken the argument that closeness of fit between the religious system of the Chinese immigrants and that of the receiving society lies at the crux of the matter. For in Vietnam, where the religious system, derivative in large part from China, is closely similar to that of the Chinese, the descendants of Chinese immigrants have been more slowly assimilated than in the various Theravada countries.

When we turn to the protean Malaysian world where Islam has had its impact, we do well to take note at the onset of one verity that spans the centuries from the fifteenth to the twentieth, namely, that conversion set in train a process leading inexorably to full assimilation. Whether born in China or the Nanyang, Chinese who converted to Islam saw their descendants eventually absorbed into indigenous society.⁵⁸ Thus, a stable Chinese Peranakan society that reproduced itself across the generations would necessarily be non-Muslim. We then confront the paradox that it was precisely in Java, where until recently Islam rested only very lightly on the general population, that such communities developed rather than in those parts of Indonesia where a relatively orthodox Islam was more

⁵⁸ Cf. The Siauw Giap, “Overseas Chinese Assimilation”.

strongly entrenched. In the latter areas—Makasar, Aceh, Madura, for instance—we find evidence of continual Chinese conversions at all levels of the society.⁵⁹

We may approach a resolution of this paradox by recognizing (1) that while conversion is a barrier it is not high enough to deter anyone determined to get to the other side, (2) that the strength of one's desire to cross over is a function of the extent to which valued ends are attainable only on the Islamic side of the fence, and (3) that certain valued ends are likely to be "monopolized" by the body of believers only when Islam is strong and solidly entrenched within the larger society. Three valuables in scarce supply among Chinese immigrants—women, high social status, and economic opportunities—are crucial in this respect. Where Islam was universal in the receiving society and its orthodox tenets widely observed, an infidel would have been denied access to indigenous women. Under these circumstances, conversion would present itself as the only means to family life and possibly to sexual gratification as well. Similarly with high social status: the more strongly Muslim the society, the less likely it was that the sultan would be prepared to utilize foreign talent without requiring conversion, and the less likely it was that a *kafir* would find high status of any kind open to him. Moreover, in such ports as pre-Dutch Makasar and Banda, non-Muslim traders were at a distinct disadvantage in avoiding regulatory hassle and obtaining official business. Thus it was that from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, Chinese immigrants and their descendants in the strongly Muslim areas of the Archipelago were converted to Islam at a fairly steady rate. The resulting communities of Muslim "Chinese" were, religion aside, Peranakan-like in their mixed culture—sometimes known literally as "Peranakans"—but these groups were transitory, facilitating rather than blocking assimilation to indigenous Muslim society. One such community of Muslim "Chinese" in Sumenep (Madura), previously regarded by the Dutch as foreign orientals, was, in 1874, finally given recognition as native in recognition of its indigenous way of life. A similar community in Makasar, organized in the 1850s under a "Lieutenant-Peranakan", subsequently "disappeared through amalgamation with the local population".⁶⁰

The situation in Java, up through the eighteenth century at least, was by no means categorically different, despite the fact that most Javanese were hardly pious Muslims. If, on the one hand, conversion was less crucial for survival and success than in strongly Muslim areas, it was also a much less formidable step for a Chinese to take because of the generally lax conformity with orthodox practice. Service with the Javanese courts

⁵⁹ For examples, see the sources cited above in note 10.

⁶⁰ These cases, described by Dutch observers, are taken from The Siauwi Giap "Overseas Chinese Assimilation", p. 73.

and business arrangements with the Javanese elite may not have been contingent on conversion, but the Chinese who entered into them often took that step in accommodating to their new situation. Peter Carey argues that common people among the Chinese of Java might embrace Islam (1) to facilitate "closer rapport with the local population and greater acceptability as middlemen and tax farmers" and (2) to escape the various taxes and imposts levied by the Dutch authorities.⁶¹ While *abangan* Javanese women seldom made conversion a condition of their union with a Chinese partner, at least some Chinese men consented to nominal conversion in old age to please their wives. So, in Java, too, a sizeable proportion of the descendants of Chinese eventually converted—and no matter how opportunistic the initial rationale or how nominal or insignificant a step it may have seemed at the time, conversion normally ensured the incorporation of their descendants into indigenous society.

The changes that led to the stabilization of a non-Muslim Peranakan society in Java became apparent in the second half of the eighteenth century.

For one, the height of the religious "barrier" was gradually raised during the century after 1750 as the older forms of Islam that had come from India were slowly replaced by stricter and more orthodox forms of religious belief and practice. Immigrants came to Java from Arabia, and increasing numbers of Javanese Muslims were undertaking the pilgrimage to Mecca.⁶² Not unrelated was the growing tendency to link Islam with Javanese chauvinism, culminating in antisinitic violence during the Java War in 1825, when Dipanegara ordered that Chinese who wished to become Muslims should be circumcised and have their pigtails cut.⁶³ This was matched on the Chinese side not only by fear of a militant Islam but also by a growing realization that conversion was a threat to the continuity of Chinese identity. The Chinese Muslim community that, in the second half of the eighteenth century, was organized with its own *kapitan* in Batavia, had, by the first decades of the nineteenth, disappeared into the Batavian Muslim population.⁶⁴ The message was not lost on those Peranakan families who had retained a form of Chinese religion. From the early nineteenth century the Peranakan elite were marrying their children almost exclusively to other Peranakans or Chinese, and intermarriage with even nominally Muslim Javanese also dropped off among the rank and file.

This brief review of the interrelation between Islam and Chinese assimilation nicely complicates our original, rudimentary formulation. It

⁶¹ Carey, "Changing Javanese Perceptions", p. 12.

⁶² The Siauw Giap, "Overseas Chinese Assimilation", p. 72.

⁶³ Carey, p. 12, note 51; see also pp. 41–42.

⁶⁴ Castles, "Ethnic Profile", p. 162.

appears that conversion to the religion of indigenes fosters the absorption of local-born Chinese into indigenous society. In the Theravada Buddhist countries, conversion was easy, unself-conscious, gradual, and seemingly inexorable. In the strongly Islamic societies of the Archipelago, conversion was difficult, self-conscious, and sharply discontinuous—but commonplace, nonetheless, for those Chinese who elected to settle down. Paradoxically, conversion was only somewhat less common in the less orthodox and only nominally Muslim areas, for, while the stakes were lower, the prospect of conversion was correspondingly less formidable. Growing resistance to Islam undoubtedly played a critical part in the formation of Peranakan society during the century after 1750, for it led Chinese to seek out non-Muslim wives and rear non-Muslim offspring whose reluctance to be fully incorporated in Javanese society stemmed in part from the “religious barrier”. Specifically religious developments take us part of the way in explaining that growing resistance—the movement in Java to bring local religious practice closer to Middle Eastern orthodoxy and the nativist appeal to Islam during the uprisings of 1825—but the decisive changes may well have been those in the political economy that fundamentally altered Peranakan–Javan interrelations. Nonetheless, quite apart from historically contingent changes in conversion rates, we may safely conclude that conversion to Islam, no less than to Theravada Buddhism, was itself a royal road to eventual assimilation.

One might expect the same to be true of conversion to Christianity, but the case of the Chinese Mestizos in the Philippines subverts any generic formulation. Unlike the Dutch in Java or the British in Malaya, the Spanish in the Philippines saw Christianization of their subjects as central to their colonial mission. The friars were zealous and effective. Some learned Hokkien in order to reach the Chinese, just as others mastered Tagalog and other Philippine languages. Catholic converts were exempted from some of the more onerous restrictions imposed on the Chinese. As virtually the entire native population in the vicinity of Manila and other towns was converted, the Catholic friars were positioned to limit the availability of non-Catholic native women as wives for Chinese immigrants. Inter-marriage was permitted only when both parties were Catholic. The emergent Mestizo society thus included many mixed-bloods who had been reared as Catholics, and, in short order, with ready assists from both church and state, Mestizo culture *was* Catholic.⁶⁵ Indeed, during the seventeenth century the situation confronting the Chinese immigrant who wished to settle down in the Philippines was structurally analogous to that of his counterpart in, say, Makasar or Aceh: with virtually all the goodies monopolized by adherents of scriptural religion, conversion was strongly

⁶⁵ Wickberg, *Chinese in Philippine Life*, pp. 18–20.

indicated. Despite the structural parallel leading to nearly mandatory conversion, however, the consequences of conversion were quite different. The Catholic descendants of Chinese immigrants in the Philippines formed a stable intermediate society that reproduced itself across the generations, whereas the Muslim descendants of Chinese in Makasar and Aceh were absorbed into the general (Muslim) population within a generation. Why?

A major part of the answer lies in the consistency and effectiveness of Spanish policy. In keeping with a shrewd overall strategy, Spanish authorities were determined to strengthen the Mestizos at the expense of the Chinos and, insofar as possible, to isolate the indigenous population from either.⁶⁶ Their legal provisions were designed to serve those ends, and the remarkable degree to which Spanish friars regulated local communities ensured general compliance. The law specified that the offspring of a Chinese Mestizo, whether the mother was Mestiza or India, were Mestizo by definition, and the Church, through its control of marriage and baptism, effectively reinforced the law.⁶⁷ The child of a Mestizo was baptized as such and brought to communion in a Mestizo church. And as youths came of age, they were enrolled in the Mestizo or the Indio tax register according to the racial status of their fathers.

Nonetheless, even the combined efforts of church and state might not have succeeded in the face of strong social pressures to assimilate. That such pressures did not develop follows from factors already discussed. First, the fact that Philippine indigenes had never developed a high civilization rendered indigenous society even less attractive to creolized Chinese than in Java. Second, as in Java and the Straits Settlements, continual recruitment from Chinese society fed commercial wealth and enterprise into Mestizo society, thereby providing the material basis for standards of living above those available to most indigenes. In this regard the Philippines present a special twist, for there, where both the Indios and the

⁶⁶ During the early centuries the Spanish authorities perceived the Sangleys as a serious threat to overall colonial security and sought to restrict their numbers. The requirement that children of Chinese immigrants be registered as Mestizos served this end, and the various policies favouring Mestizos over Sangleys reflected the hope that Chinese Mestizos would combine Chinese-like economic performance with political loyalty and docility. Entrepreneurial skills would be lost through assimilation. In the nineteenth century the generalized concern that Indios might be contaminated through contact with Mestizos took on a survivalist rhetoric. In a secret report of 1842, Sinibaldo Mas wrote that, if Spain hoped to retain the Philippines, then the authorities must ensure that the brains and wealth of the Mestizos never become allied with the numerical strength of the Indios. The two races must be kept separated, their separate gremios maintained, and their rivalries encouraged. See Wickberg, "Chinese Mestizo", p. 88.

⁶⁷ In the same fashion the friars enforced the legal requirement that the offspring of Chinese were Mestizo. In fact, virtually the only way for a Chinese to prevent his local-born children from being reared as Catholics was to take them with him back to China.

Mestizos had been Hispanicized and Catholicized, the Mestizos were seen not only as having a higher *standard* of living but also a more prestigious *style* of living.⁶⁸ But in the long run, as we shall see, Mestizo society did *not* persist. The factors mentioned help explain why it lasted as long as it did; the lack of a religious barrier between Mestizos and indigenes must be seen as a major reason why it did not perdure.

Diverging political economies

What, then, was the twentieth-century fate of the three intermediate societies? In a word, the Babas and Mestizos have lost their distinctive identities, the former having been incorporated into Chinese society, the latter having merged with indigenes to form modern Filipino society. Only the Peranakans persist as an ethnic group apart.

In tracing the historical roots of these divergent outcomes, we may begin with the evolving position of creolized societies within the colonial political economies. The nineteenth century saw a dramatic increase in the wealth and power of all three societies and, as we saw earlier, also in their numerical strength. This worldly success was accompanied by social consolidation and a cultural efflorescence during the last quarter of the century. While the beginnings of this ascendance may be described in similar terms for Peranakans, Babas, and Mestizos, the process itself served to position each rather differently within the political economy. In path-dependent fashion, these nineteenth-century differences closed off certain twentieth-century possibilities and favoured others.

A basic shift in the patterns of foreign trade gathered momentum during the 1820s, when the absolute volume of trade increased with the end of Anglo-Dutch hostilities. Critical developments include Western industrialization, with its appetite for raw materials and need for markets, and the British success in opening China to opium, which effectively reversed the global balance of payments.⁶⁹ Southeast Asian commodities that had been produced largely for the China market were in many cases redirected westward, and new cash crops were introduced. The second quarter of the century saw a sharp increase in Southeast Asian production for the world market—of coffee, sugar, tea, indigo, and tobacco in Java; of sugar, abaca, tobacco, indigo, and rice in the Philippines; and of pepper, gambier, tapioca, sago, and tin in Malaya. Britain's response to the new opportunities was to establish strategic Singapore as a bastion of free trade. The Spanish encouraged economic development in the Philippines by relaxing trade regulations and, in 1834, opening Manila to traders from

⁶⁸ Wickberg, "Chinese Metizo", pp. 93–95.

⁶⁹ Carl A. Trocki, *Opium and Empire: Chinese Society in Colonial Singapore, 1800–1910* (Ithaca: Cornell U. Press, 1990), 220–21.

any country and permitting trade to any and all foreign ports.⁷⁰ The Dutch introduced to Java, in 1830, the so-called Cultivation System, whereby agriculturalists were forced to produce and deliver cash crops for export. These opening moves were followed by others designed to make the colonies profitable.

Leaving aside for the moment the distinction between creolized Chinese and more recent immigrants, we may safely say that the Chinese were essential to colonial strategies—and were perceived as such. The symbiotic interdependence that had long characterized Western–Chinese business relations was regularized and systematized at this time. Chinese increasingly served Western import-export companies by collecting the local products needed for export and disposing of European manufactures in local markets, and in consequence Western capital increasingly underwrote Chinese systems of credit.

More than ever before, then, Western merchants needed to establish the trustworthiness of collaborating Chinese, and in this respect creolized Chinese traders held an advantage over their China-born counterparts. A Chinese trader who had a local family and owned real property within the colony could be more readily trusted not to abscond.⁷¹ With respect to the Chinese Babas, the point was sharply made in the pages of the *Singapore Chronicle* in 1829:

Not many weeks ago, . . . some of our Chinese merchants (natives of China) converted everything in their possession into dollars, and returned to China with the proceeds . . . without paying a single debt. The principal part of the resident Chinese here, however, are natives of Malacca, and [since they] are generally possessed of some little property, . . . there is not so much fear of their decamping.⁷²

The risks of Western traders would, of course, be further reduced if the local traders with whom they necessarily cooperated had some understanding of Western business methods. A British writer who investigated the situation in Singapore in the early 1830s advised European traders to do business with Babas on that count as well: “They are more enlightened and make better merchants. Many of this class who have been educated at the Malaccan College, speak English tolerably well, and, from their constant communication with the Europeans they have acquired in some measure their habits and modes of transacting business . . .”⁷³ The same

⁷⁰ Wickberg, *Chinese in Philippine Life*, pp. 46–47.

⁷¹ This argument is made for Singapore in LEE Poh Ping, *Chinese Society*, chap. 2.

⁷² *Singapore Chronicle*, 13 August 1829. Quoted from LEE Poh Ping, *Chinese Society*, p. 20.

⁷³ George W. Earl, *The Eastern Seas, or voyages and discoveries in the Indian archipelago in 1832–33–34* (London: W.H. Allen, 1837), p. 363.

considerations caused European import-export houses in the Philippines and Java to favour Mestizo and Peranakan merchants over China-born Chinese.

Thus, at the onset of the nineteenth-century trade boom, the three groups of creolized Chinese appeared to be positioned similarly with respect to the world economy. Nevertheless, within a few decades their objective situations within the political economy of the respective colonies had sharply diverged. One major point of differentiation concerns the mode of governing or controlling local Chinese communities. The usual arrangement in pre-colonial Southeast Asia was indirect rule through headmen or officers—the generic term was *kapitan*, from the Portuguese—appointed by the state from the ranks of prominent and respected local Chinese. The Chinese officer system was continued under colonial regimes, but the arrangements and duration varied widely, as will be seen.⁷⁴ A second important point of differentiation was colonial policy with respect to revenue farms, the local government monopolies for which Chinese were usually the sole bidders. Revenue farming, which also predated the Europeans in Southeast Asia, was adopted by early colonial regimes and subsequently expanded in scope. By the nineteenth century the system embraced a wide range of economic activities, from taxing carriages and cockpits in the Philippines to running pawnshops and gambling dens in Java.⁷⁵ However, the most lucrative of the nineteenth-century monopolies by far was the opium farm, established in Penang and Singapore within a few years after the British occupation, in Java in 1809, and in the Philippines in 1843. Opium, originating in British India, profoundly shaped the political economy in each of the colonies in question⁷⁶—but, again, in rather different ways.

In Java the system of Chinese officers and the revenue farms evolved together;⁷⁷ both were tidied up, vastly strengthened, and expanded during the second and third quarters of the century. Revenue farmers and Chinese officers alike were drawn from a small elite of prominent Peranakan businessmen, whose class power and personal wealth grew rapidly as mechanisms of appropriating resources from the countryside were perfected. The considerable authority granted the Chinese officers coupled with the coercive power legitimately exercised by farmers to protect their monopolies facilitated uncontested economic penetration of the entire society. The vast hierarchies of patronage and credit that culminated in

⁷⁴ Skinner, "Overseas Chinese Leadership: Paradigm for a Paradox" in *Leadership and Authority*, ed. Gehan Wijeyewardene (Singapore: University of Malaya Press, 1968).

⁷⁵ For fuller discussion of the range of revenue farms, see Wickberg, *Chinese in Philippine Life*, pp. 113–114, and Rush, *Opium to Java*, 88–89, 98–101.

⁷⁶ Current understanding of this crucial point rests on the penetrating analyses of Rush, *Opium to Java*, and Trocki, *Opium and Empire*.

⁷⁷ This brief sketch cannot do justice to the brilliant analysis in Rush, on which it is based.

the Chinese officers' councils of Batavia, Semarang, and Surabaya extended to the opium dens, pawnshops and salt stores in towns throughout the island, to some 3500 farmed markets, and to the myriad tollhouses that dotted the countryside.

Sinkheh (i.e. new arrivals from China) had little choice but to find patrons who slotted them into the lower reaches of the hierarchy, where many were in daily contact with Javanese peasants and semi-criminal rural riffraff. In all probability most China-born Chinese were regular smokers of opium, but in Java, unlike most of the rest of Southeast Asia, opium consumption had spread into the indigenous population. In Central and East Java by far the greater part of opium farm profits derived from Javanese consumption. Two features of the Javan scene are particularly relevant to the present analysis. First, the wealth and economic power generated by this exploitative system accrued to Peranakans, not China-born Chinese. The latter, whether coolies, pedlars, revenue-farm agents, or shopkeepers, were for the most part caught up in a web of indebtedness to Peranakan patrons. The only immigrants who achieved any considerable wealth and power were those few taken as sons-in-law into elite Peranakan families. Second, the system had the inevitable effect of exacerbating resentment and fanning antisinicism among Javanese. While it would be difficult to choose between the Dutch and the Chinese in terms of exploitative design and sheer rapacity, the Dutch, officials and merchants alike, were positioned at several removes from the Javanese masses, whereas the dirty work of Peranakan revenue farmers was for the most part carried out by Chinese interacting on a daily basis with the common people.

The colonial regime in Java itself became addicted to opium, finding it impossible even to consider doing without farm revenues. The same was true of the Straits Settlements where the opium farm accounted for 46.7 per cent of total state revenues during the 1830s and 50.5 per cent during the decade beginning in 1853.⁷⁸ In the Straits, of course, opium smokers were almost entirely Chinese.

Whereas the Dutch made a show of controlling the Chinese on the ground, imposing the pass-and-quarter system with one hand while granting routine exemptions for farm agents and their hangers-on with the other, the British made no pretence at institutional constraints in the Straits. In each of the three settlements a Chinese headman had initially been appointed, but the British soon abandoned indirect rule through a Chinese officer system as unworkable for so heterogeneous a society. In Malaya, by contrast with Java, the major export commodities were all produced

⁷⁸ These percentages are calculated from data compiled by Trocki, *Opium and Empire*, p. 96, Table 2.

by Chinese labour, and growing demand led to immigration on a large scale. The agriculturalists producing gambier and pepper were largely Teochiu immigrants from Chaozhou prefecture, while the tin miners were for the most part either Cantonese from Guangzhou prefecture or Hakkas from Jiayingzhou. Secret societies played a critical role in finding jobs for newcomers from China, furnishing them assistance and protection, organizing funerals, and generally providing something equivalent to a local community. More broadly, they were the major locus of social control within the inclusive Chinese community, providing "police" protection and "legal" facilities, albeit at the cost of continual conflict over turf.⁷⁹ From the 1830s to the 1880s colonial authorities were content to let secret societies keep "the disorderly class of Chinese" under control.⁸⁰ They appear not to have realized that the internal structure of the government's own opium farm provided another important, albeit overlapping, mechanism of social control.⁸¹

Within this heterogeneous and altogether messy Chinese society, the Baba business elite managed to maintain pre-eminence throughout the nineteenth century,⁸² but its position was more tenuous than that of the Peranakan oligarchy, its power far less absolute, and its lines of control much less direct.⁸³ As early as the 1840s the *sinkheh* outnumbered Babas, and by 1891 the 50,000 Babas were swamped by approximately 175,000 China-born Chinese.⁸⁴ Moreover, the different productive sectors were organized into semi-autonomous hierarchies of patronage and credit: Teochiu merchants controlled pepper and gambier production, Cantonese

⁷⁹ Freedman, "Immigrants and Associations," pp. 65–74. For other interpretations of the role of secret societies in nineteenth-century Singapore, all building on Freedman's work, see LEE Poh Ping, *Chinese Society*; MAK Lau Fong *The Sociology of Secret Societies: A study of Chinese secret societies in Singapore and peninsular Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: OUP, 1981); and Trocki, *Opium and Empire*.

⁸⁰ W.A. Pickering, the first Protector of the Chinese in Singapore, wrote that "if secret societies were abolished, we should have no check at all on the thousands of the disorderly class of Chinese" (quoted in Lee Poh Ping, *Chinese Society*, p. 89). The *Straits Guardian* of 17 February 1877 pointed out that the "Government has no direct means of communication with the lower class Chinese, and it is this work which the Secret Societies carry on" (quoted in Trocki, *Opium and Empire*, p. 156).

⁸¹ This argument is a major theme of Trocki's book.

⁸² Allen J. Chun ["Pariah capitalism and the overseas Chinese of Southeast Asia: Problems in the definition of the problem", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 12 (1989): 233–256] underlines the importance of "the prior existence of a wealthy commercial class" to provide "the necessary capital for the opening of new enterprises in return for some per centage share of the finished product". In Malaya these urban financiers were largely Babas.

⁸³ I rely here on Trocki, *Opium and Empire*, whose major arguments, being tangential to my narrow purpose, are not summarized here.

⁸⁴ See note 20 above. The 1891 census returns give the total population of the Straits Settlements as 509,290, of which 227,057 were Chinese, Babas included. The census data are reproduced in Purcell, *The Chinese*, pp. 232–234.

merchants had links with Cantonese miners in the Malay states, and most shopkeepers were clients of big Hokkien merchants. Despite their key role in linking these patronage structures to the British and in channelling British capital into Chinese enterprises, the Babas needed allies within the Chinese community. Given their own ancestry, they naturally turned to Hokkien merchants, and from the 1840s on leading Baba and Hokkien merchants often acted in concert. In occasional coalition with Hokkiens, Babas held the opium farm without break to 1848, when they lost out to a Teochiu-dominated syndicate. Following a tumultuous era of shifting coalitions and power struggle, Baba-dominated syndicates again held the farm without break from 1886 into the twentieth century.

Without going into further detail, we may note three points of particular relevance to a comparative analysis. First, while the exploitative apparatus of opium and indebtedness was no less pernicious than in Java, in the Straits the oppressed were almost solely Chinese, thereby precluding any impact on interracial relations. Second, the balance of power within the Chinese community drew Baba merchants into working coalitions with their Hokkien counterparts, and the continual interaction reinforced the Hokkien elements in Baba culture and promoted joint Hokkien-Baba rituals in the realms of kinship and religion.⁸⁵ Third, since Babas lacked the numerical strength and economic power to dominate the system, they necessarily threw themselves into a competitive arena where the other major players were China-born Chinese. Thus, they entered the twentieth century already partly caught up in the organizations of *Chinese* society.

Turning to the Philippines, during the first half of the nineteenth century, it was the Mestizos rather than the China-born *Chinos* who dominated the economy.⁸⁶ Mestizos played key roles in the development of export crops. They were indigo and abaca wholesalers, buying up the crops and shipping them to Manila for processing or export. They had major investments in paddy fields, supplying Manila with rice from estates in central Luzon. Mestizo shippers also dominated the inter-island rice trade between surplus and deficit areas. In the case of sugar, with loans from British and other foreign merchants at mid-century, Mestizo entrepreneurs modernized and greatly expanded production in Negros, and Mestizos were also prominent among sugar millers and refiners. Mestizo merchants in Cebu developed a network of clients and purchasing agents that extended throughout the Visayas and into Mindanao and, together with Mestizo rivals in the Iloilo area, monopolized the Visayan trade with

⁸⁵ For an analysis of "clan kongsis" patronized by both Babas and Hokkiens in Penang, see Eng Seng Ho, "Baba Identity", pp. 96-111. For examples of temples and rituals shared by Babas and Hokkiens in Melaka, see Tan Chee Beng, *Baba of Melaka*, pp. 212-216.

⁸⁶ Wickberg, "Chinese Mestizo", pp. 80-86; Wickberg, *Chinese in Philippine Life*, pp. 94-108.

Manila. The British and American firms established in Manila in the 1830s and 40s worked largely through Mestizo wholesalers.

This picture was dramatically changed between 1850 and 1880.⁸⁷ Mestizos were largely displaced in these classic middleman roles by Chinos throughout the economy—a displacement precipitated by an abrupt shift in colonial policy. Since the 1760s the Spanish authorities had, for security reasons, deliberately curtailed the immigration of Chinese, circumscribed their occupational choice, and restricted their geographic mobility, but, in a decree of 1839 designed to spur economic development in a new era, these policies were essentially reversed. Further liberalizations ensued, and Chinese immigration took off on a sustained rise that increased the Chino population from less than 6000 in the early 1840s to 66,000 (a likely underestimate) in 1886. While the Mestizos may not have been outnumbered, they were quickly overwhelmed by the aggressive competition. By the 1880s Chinos had achieved control of indigo and abaca wholesaling, and they quickly took over tobacco wholesaling when the government monopoly was closed in 1880. *Chinos* dealt a fatal blow to the Mestizo wholesaling trade in the Visayas by building up their own Manila-centred hierarchies of agent networks. Chinese also regained their erstwhile dominance of Manila's retail trade and gradually extended their retailing activity into all the provinces.

To cope with the influx of *sinkheh*, the government strengthened and extended the Chinese officer System.⁸⁸ Already in the 1830s, when similar developments were taking place in Java, the Spanish had delegated new legal, police, and tax collection responsibilities to the *Gobernadorcillo de Chinos* in Manila, and in 1861 provision was made for the election of the *Gobernadorcillo* and his junior officers by the Chino oligarchy of Manila. In the 1860s and 70s the Chinese officer system was extended to Cavite, Pampanga, and Iloilo. As in Java, the Chinese officer system came to be intimately intertwined with opium farming. The first opium farm, for the Manila area only, was established in 1843, and, beginning in 1850, new farms were quickly set up in various provinces until the entire country was covered.⁸⁹ Opium smoking made little headway among Mestizos or *Indios*, and no Mestizo is recorded as having made a successful bid for a farm. Thus, apart from occasional Spanish participation in Manila farm syndicates, the Philippine opium business was from the start an all-Chino operation. As in Java, the geographic expansion of the farm coincided with, and was a cover for, the penetration of Chinese enterprise throughout the economy. From all accounts, the *Chino*

⁸⁷ Wickberg, *Chinese in Philippine Life*, pp. 67–80, 94–108; Wickberg, “Chinese Mestizo”, pp. 90–93.

⁸⁸ Wickberg, *Chinese in Philippine Life*, pp. 194–99.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 114–19.

hierarchy of patronage and credit built up after 1850 largely excluded Mestizos. Unsurprisingly, Mestizos increasingly resented the *Chino* competition, repeatedly protested *Chino* encroachments to the Spanish authorities, and generally found much to disparage in the character and motives of the *sinkheh*.

In sum, a comparison of the Chinese experience within distinctive colonial political economies reveals a number of fateful ironies. In each of the three colonies, opium and other revenue farmers were drawn from a small elite of prominent, wealthy businessmen—but in composition those elites differed sharply. In Java they were all Peranakans, in the Philippines they were all *Chinos*, while in the Straits they were both, that is, both Baba and China-born Chinese, sometimes joined in the same syndicate. Opium wealth and the power it spawned strengthened creolized society in Java while strengthening its competitors in the Philippines. The expansion of revenue farming and the accompanying Chinese penetration of the countryside had the effect in Java of increasing antagonism between all Chinese and indigenous Javans, but in the Philippines of increasing antagonism between China-born Chinese, on the one hand, and Mestizos and *Indios* together, on the other. Indeed, anti-Chinese sentiment was part of what brought Mestizos and *Indios* together as the century drew to a close.

The timing of the nineteenth-century immigration wave was critical. The onset of mass immigration came earlier to the Straits Settlements than to the Philippines, and later still to Java. In consequence, the first of the *sinkheh* to scramble to the top entered leadership arenas in the 1840s in the Straits, in the 1860s in the Philippines, but not until the 1890s in Java. Thus, the Baba elite was forced to make common cause with at least some of the China-born leaders to retain the economic high ground, whereas the Peranakan elite had no need even to consider giving entry to the China-born. And in the Philippines, the course of events might well have been altered had the influx of *sinkheh* been delayed by a few decades, leaving Mestizos to monopolize middleman profits from the nineteenth-century export boom.

Twentieth-century dénouements

The 1890s saw the onset of major changes in the political economy of all Southeast Asian colonies.⁹⁰ As the global economy shifted from commercial to industrial capitalism, colonial policy moved away from free trade toward managed economies under strengthened state control. Colonial rule became more intensive, more bureaucratic, and more efficient.

⁹⁰ I follow the lead here of Trocki, *Opium and Empire*, chap. 8.

As public opinion in the metropolitan countries took on a keen interest in the welfare of their colonial subjects, colonial servants sought to demonstrate the white man's capacity for efficient and benevolent rule. To this end they needed to bring the society as well as the economy under control. To the new breed of professional civil servants, the inherited systems of indirect rule were a confession of impotence. Sharing power with Chinese revenue farmers came to be seen as unnecessary, inappropriate, and, above all, inefficient. In the end, farming systems succumbed to "the continuing trend toward bureaucratic rationalization", with an assist from anti-opium crusades in the metropolitan countries. The opium farms were abolished in Java in 1893, in the Philippines in 1906, and in the Straits Settlements in 1910.⁹¹ In each case opium revenues increased substantially under the government monopolies that replaced them, thus demonstrating that distribution was more efficient through the regularized bureaucratic channels than through the Chinese networks. In Java, the commercial network that had been so closely affiliated with the opium farm was badly disrupted as petty traders defaulted with wholesalers, who in turn defaulted with European companies. With their patronage networks damaged, the Peranakan officers eventually lost their effectiveness as brokers between their own community and the authorities, and their functions were in part assumed by the Chinese chambers of commerce that were established after 1900 in the major cities of Java.⁹²

The legitimacy of the Peranakan officers was also directly challenged by leaders of a new non-Peranakan Chinese community that was in process of stabilization around the turn of the century.⁹³ What was novel was not the presence of China-born Chinese men, but rather the marriage of a significant proportion of them to Chinese women. This settled, and eventually self-perpetuating, Chinese society is usually called *totok*, an Indonesian term meaning, in this context, culturally pure Chinese. Since a similar process was under way in the Philippines and the Straits, I use "Totok" hereafter as a generic term. The key development in the formation of Totok society in all three areas was the rise of female immigration from China. Prior to the 1890s, respectable Chinese women were exceedingly rare in Southeast Asia.⁹⁴ The large China-born populations that had

⁹¹ Rush, *Opium to Java*, chap. 10; Trocki, *Opium and Empire*, chap. 7.

⁹² Rush, *Opium to Java*, chap. 12.

⁹³ Skinner, "Java's Chinese minority: Continuity and change", *JAS* 20 (1961): 353-62.

⁹⁴ Apparently the first merchants to bring their Chinese wives to the Straits were supporters of the rebels who occupied Xiamen (Amoy) during part of 1853. These merchants brought their families back to Singapore and Penang for fear of retribution by imperial troops, and returned them to Xiamen when conditions there returned to normal. At the time (25 Nov. 1853), the *Singapore Free Press* noted that "The advent of several Chinese ladies with small feet has occasioned some sensation. . . ." In 1863, a similar episode occurred

grown up in the Straits Settlements and the Philippines by the mid-nineteenth century and in Java by 1890 consisted largely of sojourners, most of whom did in fact return to their native places in China to marry; others were enabled to sojourn abroad for extended periods precisely because wives remained at home to care for parents. When, around the turn of the century, female immigration took on significant proportions,⁹⁵ an increasing number of immigrant men no longer found it necessary to bring culturally alien women into their homes.

Assimilation to the intermediate societies was further discouraged by a shift in the proportion of speech groups among immigrants in favour of Hakkas and Cantonese, whose subcultures were less than congenial to the Hokkien-flavoured creolized cultures. The rise of Chinese nationalism supplied the motivation to remain Chinese and part of the means—Chinese-language schools and newspapers—to perpetuate Chinese culture in an alien setting. Moreover, the establishment of a Chinese press and the introduction of a “national language” in the schools enabled Chinese of disparate speech groups to communicate with one another. Together these developments established the basis for a stable and viable *Chinese* culture, and by 1910 self-perpetuating Totok communities had formed in the major cities of all three colonies. The coming of age of Totok society was marked by an efflorescence of legitimate organizational activity. The most important of the traditional forms of Chinese urban organization that were adapted, *huiguan* (speech-group and native-place associations), assumed many functions of the discredited secret societies.⁹⁶ It is worth noting the total irrelevance of *huiguan* to the creolized Chinese.

Chinese immigration continued to rise during the first decade of the twentieth century, as did the proportion of women, and Totok society was further strengthened by the retention of wealth within the community. Whereas formerly the riches acquired by China-born men had gone to China or passed to creolized descendants, now family fortunes were handed down to Totok heirs. In due course, the ascendant Totoks challenged not only the economic power of creolized Chinese but also their social and

when the wives of Straits merchants fled Taiping devastation. There is no record that these women returned to China, and thereafter a few other merchants maintained all-Chinese families in the Straits Settlements. All such cases known to me there or in the Philippines are Hokkien. See Lim Joo Hock, “Chinese Female Immigration,” pp. 66–67, 99. In the Philippines as late as 1886, official statistics recorded only 164 women in a total Chinese population of over 66,000. See Wickberg, *Chinese in Philippine Life*, p. 174.

⁹⁵ In the Straits as a whole, the annual number of female immigrants rose as high as 10,000 for the first time in 1893, when females constituted 4.8 per cent of all Chinese immigrants. Lim Joo Hock, “Chinese Female Immigration”, p. 99.

⁹⁶ Cf. Freedman, “Immigrants and Associations”.

cultural hegemony. It will be useful to summarize briefly how it went in each case separately.

The relative decline of Baba business clout, already apparent by the turn of the century in Singapore, was precipitated in Penang by the loss of the opium farm in 1910 and the introduction of the dredge by Western tin-mining companies in 1912, which reduced the profitability of Baba-financed enterprises.⁹⁷ By this time Hokkien was replacing Baba creole as the business language of the Straits, and the Babas themselves were shifting to white collar and professional jobs. The rationale for a cultural offensive to reclaim the wayward Babas was enunciated as early as 1891 in *Sing Po* (Xing Bao), the most influential of the early Chinese-language newspapers.⁹⁸

Chinese immigrants married local girls and brought up children to learn Western language so as to have contacts with foreigners. These local-born Chinese are at a loss when asked to read Chinese characters or books. After many years they will forget their Chinese dialects as well. By that time, several hundred thousand Chinese will have degenerated into barbarians, spreading their hair over their shoulders and buttoning their garments on the left side.

To remedy this situation, the newly confident Totok leaders in 1902 launched a mass movement in Singapore to revive and propagate Confucian principles and in 1904 founded in Penang the Straits' first modern Chinese school, the Kongmiao Zhonghua Xuetang.⁹⁹

As in Penang, loss of the opium farm in Java marked the onset of gradual decline in the economic clout of creolized society. Peranakan businessmen never did regain their grip on entrepreneurial activity in the countryside. When the pass-and-quarter system was finally abolished in 1916,¹⁰⁰ it was *sinkheh* who seized the opportunity, backed by credit from Totok rather than Peranakan firms. In a protracted occupational re-adjustment, children of the Chinese officer/revenue farmer elite were directed toward Western professions, while the middle class diversified broadly, showing a preference, as in the Straits, for clerical and staff positions in large enterprises. Nonetheless, in the first decade of the century the Totoks had not yet matched Peranakans in commercial strength, and

⁹⁷ Chun, "Pariah Capitalism", p. 244.

⁹⁸ *Sing Po* 27 July 1881. Quoted in Yen Ching-hwang, *A Social History of the Chinese in Singapore and Malaya, 1880-1911* (Singapore: OUP, 1986), 272.

⁹⁹ See Yen Ching-hwang, *Social History*, pp. 292-302.

¹⁰⁰ In the wake of the demise of the opium farm, the Dutch authorities tightened the pass-and-quarter regulations from which farm employees had been routinely exempted, presumably the better to enforce the monopoly of the new Opium Regie.

The pass system was slightly relaxed in 1904 and loosened further in 1910. See Rush 1990, 242-243, and Donald E. Willmott, *The National Status of the Chinese in Indonesia, 1900-1958* (Ithaca: Cornell University, Modern Indonesia Project, 1961), 7.

it is indicative of Peranakan confidence that the Peranakan began self-reform on their own, preempting Totok initiative. In 1900, a Dutch-educated son of a Chinese officer, writing in Malay, called for a cultural revival, noting that "A large number of Chinese here do not know the wonderful teachings of Confucius".¹⁰¹ In that year he and a group of Peranakan leaders founded the Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan (Zhonghua Huiguan) with the objective of promoting Confucian principles and reforming Peranakan customs. The organization focused its considerable resources on promoting modern primary schools teaching Mandarin, of which no fewer than fifty-four had been established by 1908.

Comparable processes in the Philippines were telescoped into the last fifteen years of the Spanish period. I have already described the economic rout of Mestizos at the hands of Chino competitors, speeded up by the latter group's complete control of the opium farm. The occupational response of the Mestizos was a partial abandonment of commerce and a shift to landholding, commercial agriculture, and the professions.¹⁰² The Totok cultural offensive was launched in Manila in 1899, with the establishment of the Anglo-Chinese School (Zhongxi Xuexiao), which provided "a combination of Confucian learning and practical commercial instruction aimed particularly at Chinese mestizos, who formed the majority of the first classes".¹⁰³

The pan-Chinese movement, with its promise of cultural purity through resinification, never had a chance in the Philippines. It was a lost cause there because by the late nineteenth century a perverse kind of Westernization had taken Mestizos beyond the point of no return. I have already mentioned the attraction that the culture of colonial powerholders held for creolized societies. In the Philippines Spanish authorities from the early centuries positively encouraged Hispanicization, and in this regard they were quite evenhanded as between Mestizos and Indios. Wickberg's authoritative accounts of Chinese life in the last decades of the Spanish period convey the impression that Mestizo elites were then in hot pursuit of Spanish culture—but so, also, it appears, were indigenous elites.¹⁰⁴ This convergence has its irony. One reason the descendants of Chinese spurned indigenous society during in the formative years was that, lacking a lit-

¹⁰¹ Phoa Keng Hek was the leader in question. Passage excerpted from the translation by Leo Suryadinata (*Political Thinking of the Indonesian Chinese, 1900–1977*, Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1979, p. 5), quoted from Rush, *Opium to Java*, p. 246. For other details in this paragraph see Rush, Willmott, "National Status", and Lea E. Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism: The genesis of the pan-Chinese movement in Indonesia, 1900–1916* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1960).

¹⁰² Wickberg, "Chinese Mestizo", pp. 90–93.

¹⁰³ Wickberg, *Chinese in Philippine Life*, p. 188.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 134–45.

erate tradition or a ruling class, it was seen as culturally inferior. Yet for that very reason Indio elites had no specifically indigenous high culture to aspire to, and the Filipino civilization that was evolving in the nineteenth century was necessarily informed by Spanish culture and Roman Catholicism. Mestizo culture was by the 1880s no less Spanish and no less Catholic than was Indio culture; it was, moreover, more affluent and prestigious. Thus, paradoxically enough, when legal distinctions between Mestizos and Indios were abolished in the 1880s, the very economic superiority that had made individual Mestizos reluctant to assimilate facilitated the integration of upper-class Mestizos *en bloc* into the emerging national society as the *dominant* element of the Filipino elite. In a very real sense, Filipino culture was formed by Mestizo and *Indio* elites acting in concert. Thus the Chinese Mestizos were not really absorbed into indigenous society; rather, they merged with it to form modern Filipino society. To this day Mestizo elements are apparent in the culture of the Filipino elite.¹⁰⁵

If the Mestizos were past salvation by the pan-Chinese movement in the Philippines, in the Straits the Babas must have appeared highly vulnerable to the ascendant Totoks, who wishfully perceived them as an aberrant subgroup of the Hokkien *bang*. Baba businessmen were well represented in the major pan-Chinese associations founded in the first decade of the century, most notably the Chinese Chambers of Commerce in Penang (1903) and Singapore (1906), and it was precisely because of bitter rivalry among the various speech-group *bang* in the Singapore Chamber that the Babas were able to serve their interests as well as they did for so long.¹⁰⁶ In Penang, Babas dominated the Chamber for the first decade or so, and all of its Presidents and Vice-Presidents from 1903 to 1941 were English-speaking. Still, their role was eventually reduced to that of diplomatic frontmen, with real power in the hands of Totoks, who outnumbered Babas three-to-one on the executive committee.¹⁰⁷ In Diana Ooi's view,¹⁰⁸ Baba members "recognized that in terms of invested capital and contacts, in willingness to take great risks, in tenacity, experience, and knowledge, they were no match for their Chinese-educated and even semi-illiterate colleagues. Consequently, they preferred to help carry out policy rather than initiate it".

Even as they relinquished the reins of economic control, however, the Babas vigorously asserted their distinctive cultural identity. Their pride

¹⁰⁵ Benedict Anderson, personal communication.

¹⁰⁶ On the Singapore Chamber, see Yen Ching-hwang, *Social History*, chap. 6, esp. p. 190.

¹⁰⁷ On the Penang Chamber, see Eng Seng Ho, "Baba Identity", pp. 86-94.

¹⁰⁸ Diana Ooi, "A Study of the English-speaking Chinese of Penang, 1900-1941" (unpublished MA thesis in History, University of Malaya, 1967, p. 71). Quoted in Eng Seng Ho, "Baba Identity", p. 89.

pricked by Totok taunts that they were slipping into barbarism, Baba leaders launched a cultural reform similar in its objectives to those of the Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan in Java, and it is notable that the first modern school founded was for the education of *girls* in, *inter alia*, Romanized Malay and English.¹⁰⁹ While the Totoks themselves, several decades later, reluctantly countenanced the singular practice of educating girls, the reluctance of Babas to send their children to Chinese-language schools remained a major barrier to integration. Another was the consistent pro-British stance of virtually all Baba leaders. The major Baba community organization was appropriately called the Straits Chinese British Association, and it carried high the Union Jack and defended Baba interests *qua* British subjects to the bitter end of British rule.¹¹⁰ One might have thought that the anglicization of the Babas would have hindered their incorporation into Chinese society. But in the end it did nothing of the sort. Since World War II Chinese society itself, in Penang and Melaka as well as Singapore, has moved steadily in the direction of English-language schooling and the anglicized life-style pioneered by the Babas. Given considerable *desinification* of Chinese society as a whole in the former Straits Settlements, very little *resinification* was required of the Babas.

In Java, too, Westernization has been intertwined in complex ways with the issue of resinification. Unlike the British and even more so the Spanish, the Dutch had pursued a consistent policy of cultural exclusivism, denying Peranakans and Javans alike access to Dutch culture.¹¹¹ Thus, with the establishment of a stable Totok Chinese society in Java, the stage was set for a Chinese nationalist effort to resinify the Peranakans.¹¹² On the organizational front, Totoks quickly gained control of Chinese Chambers of Commerce, and in 1917 an unprecedented Java-wide conference of Chinese spoke for "the Chinese community" in declining an invitation to send representatives to the advisory Volksraad. Nonetheless, the attempt to incorporate Peranakans into the organizational fold did not succeed, its failure signalled in 1927 by the establishment of the Chung Hua Hui (Zhonghua Hui), the first of the major all-Peranakan community or-

¹⁰⁹ Song Ong Siang, *One Hundred Years History of the Chinese in Singapore* (London: John Murray, 1923), pp. 305–306.

¹¹⁰ See Eng Seng Ho, "Baba Identity", pp. 129–51.

¹¹¹ Nonetheless, a hungering for the prestige of Western ways became increasingly evident among the Peranakan elite during the second half of the nineteenth century. When he was a Chinese officer *cum* opium farmer in 1889, Oei Tiong Ham, who subsequently founded Kian Gwan, successfully petitioned the Dutch authorities for permission to wear Western attire in public. See Rush, *Opium to Java*, pp. 248–52, for a carefully researched summary of Oei's fascinating career.

¹¹² Skinner, "Java's Chinese Minority", pp. 357–61; Willmott, "National Status", chap. 1; Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, chap. 3.

ganizations. The cultural struggle was a closer contest. From 1900 on, the Chinese press and the school system were "dedicated to reviving the interest of Peranakans in Chinese customs, Chinese history and culture, and a Chinese point of view".¹¹³ Such a cultural reformation might have succeeded had the Dutch done nothing, but the Indies government accepted the challenge and joined the battle for the Peranakan soul. They founded in 1908 the first of a growing number of Dutch-Chinese schools, passed a law in 1910 that made all Peranakans Dutch subjects, and in 1914 began eliminating the legal bases of the official discrimination that had so riled Peranakan sensibilities. With the Dutch doing everything in their power to keep the Peranakans Indies-oriented, leaders of the Totok community, backed by a renascent China, redoubled their efforts to bring their erstwhile compatriots back to the true path. To summarize a complex story,¹¹⁴ one may say that the Dutch won the first round (by 1940 many educated Peranakan families were speaking Dutch at home) and the Chinese won the second round (by 1955 just as many educated Peranakan families were speaking Mandarin Chinese at home). The third round, however, went to the Indonesians, and it has become clear to most Peranakans that both Dutchification and resinification are historical blind alleys.

Finally, I return to religion. It is apparent that the Catholicism of *Mestizos* was critical in setting them on the course of Filipinization. Filipino nationhood was virtually an invention of the Catholic majority, *Mestizo* allied with *Indio*—an affirmation of Catholic civilization against pagans and *Moros* alike. It is scarcely less apparent that the failure of the *Babas* to embrace Islam and their tenacious adherence to a form of Chinese religion was critical in their eventual reabsorption by Chinese society. Once Islam was made an integral part of Malay nationalism, there could be no question which way the *Babas* would go if pressed. And when what had once been merely ethnic categories became ethnic blocs, their fate was sealed. In Indonesia, by contrast, the complexity of the religious scene has given the Peranakans room for manoeuvre. Religious pluralism was an essential plank in any viable *Indonesian* nationalism, and at present the official theistic policy recognizes six world religions and requires the citizenry to align with one or another.¹¹⁵ Thus, those Peranakans who had not previously embraced Christianity have been able to find a comfortable religious home within either the Buddhist or the Confucian movements, as reconstituted under government auspices.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Donald E. Willmott, *The Chinese of Semarang: A Changing Minority Community in Indonesia* (Ithaca New York: Cornell University Press, 1960), p. 31.

¹¹⁴ For a fuller interpretation, see Skinner, "Java's Chinese Minority".

¹¹⁵ See Presidential Decision No. 1, 1965, and UU No. 5, 1969, wherein Suharto's New Order legislature accepted Presidential Decision No. 1 and enacted it as law.

¹¹⁶ See Julia D. Howell, "Modernizing Religious Reform and the Far Eastern Religions in Twentieth Century Indonesia in *Spectrum: Essays Presented to Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana*

Despite their similar beginnings, our three stories have very different endings. The creolized culture and language of the Chinese Mestizos are extinct, those of the Babas are dying. The descendants of nineteenth-century Mestizos are Filipinos, rather more prominent and better off than most, but no less likely than others to engage in antisinitic politics. The descendants of nineteenth-century Babas are Chinese, rather more urbane and cosmopolitan than most, but no less likely than others to engage in political struggle against the Malays. As for the Peranakans of Java, the northcoast creole has become but a dialect of Indonesian, its relation to the national standard being similar to that of Jamaican creole to standard English,¹¹⁷ and elsewhere, Peranakan speech, while still distinctive, has lost all trace of Hokkien influence.¹¹⁸ Peranakan culture, however, survives reasonably intact. And most of the descendants of nineteenth-century Peranakans are today still Peranakans, settling rather uncomfortably into the role of yet another *sukubangsa* within the ethnic diversity that is modern Indonesia.

on his *Seventieth Birthday*, ed. S. Udin (Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 1978), p. 267, and Leo Suradinata, "Confucianism in Indonesia", *Southeast Asia* 3 (1974), pp. 881-903. A few Peranakan Chinese in Pekalongan and Yogyakarta became Hindus after 1965 (Julia D. Howell, personal communication). Charles A. Coppel notes that even the "assimilationist" stream in contemporary Peranakan politics does not go so far as to advocate conversion to Islam. Nonetheless, a few Peranakan Chinese have embraced Islam since 1965, and there exists an organization of Chinese Muslims (Perkumpulan Islam Tionghoa Indonesia). See Charles A. Coppel, "Patterns of Chinese Political Activity in Indonesia" in *The Chinese in Indonesia*, ed. J.A.C. Mackie (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1976), pp. 53-54 and note 112.

¹¹⁷ The situation is technically characterized as a "post-creole speech continuum". See Keith Whinnom, "Linguistic Hybridization and the 'Special Case' of Pidgins and Creoles" in Hymes, *Pidginization and Creolization*, pp. 91-115. As Whinnom notes (p. 111), "one must allow, in any sophisticated taxonomy, for the process of decreolization, which can in time transform a creole into something linked by a smoothly integrated bridge to the original target language of the parent pidgin—transform the creole, in effect, into a 'dialect' of the standard".

¹¹⁸ In the Javanese-speaking interior, Peranakan speech today is a distinctive mix of Javanese and Indonesian. In most of Central Java and the southern interior of East Java, Peranakan speech is based on Javanese morphology and syntax, whereas in most of East Java it is based on Indonesian morphology and syntax. Despite the loss of Hokkien influence, Peranakan speech remains a marker distinguishing them from indigenous Indonesians. See John U. Wolff, "The Indonesian spoken by the Peranakan Chinese of East Java: A Case of Language Mixture" in *Essays in Honor of Charles F. Hockett*, ed. Frederick B. Agard et al. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983); Ellen Rafferty, *Discourse Structures of the Chinese Indonesians of Malang* (Jakarta: Badan Penyelenggara Seri NUSA, 1982) and Oetomo, "Multilingualism".

4

What Else May Ngo Si Lien Mean? A Matter of Distinctions in the Fifteenth Century¹

O.W. Wolters

Ngo Si Lien was a Vietnamese who respected Chinese learning to the extent that the highest praise he could lavish on a Vietnamese ruler was that his achievements could not be bettered by even the most famous Chinese emperors in antiquity. In 1479 Ngo Si Lien was commissioned by his emperor, Le Thanh-ton, to edit the Vietnamese Annals. In the middle of the same century another historian, Phan Phu Tien, had already compiled the Annals of the Tran dynasty (1226–1400), the period that interests me here. Lien's comments on the Tran Annals are in the Chinese historiographical tradition and are intended to teach the lessons of the past in order to instruct those living in the present and future; most of what he writes manages to contrast happenings in Vietnam with those recorded in early Chinese historical literature—almost always unfavourably as far as the Tran dynasty is concerned.²

¹ I am grateful to Dr R.R.C. de Crespigny, Dr Virginia Hooker, Dr Craig Reynolds, and Dr Keith Taylor for their comments.

² On this text, see Émile Gaspardone, "Bibliographie annamite", *BEFEO* 34 (1935), pp. 51–58. The *Dai Viet su ky toan thu* (Complete Book of the Historical Records of Great Viet, hereafter referred to as the Vietnamese Annals, or *TT*) was the product of Ngo Si Lien's combining and annotating two earlier annals. These were the *Dai Viet su ky* (History of Great Viet) of Le Van Huu (events to 1225, or until the end of the Ly dynasty) and the *Dai Viet su ky tuc bien* (Continued Compilation of the Historical Records of Great Viet, hereafter referred to as the Annals or Tran Annals) of Phan Phu Tien (1226–1400, or Tran dynasty). Further revisions and additions continued until 1675, when the final form of the *TT* was fixed in print (see Appendix O, Sources for Early Vietnamese History, in Keith Weller Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam* [Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983], especially pp. 357–59).

What Lien read in the Tran Annals made him deplore his country's recent past because it hardly justified its claim to be a proper "imperial" state, ruled by a "Son of Heaven", an "emperor", and comparable in all respects except size with the only other "imperial" state: China. What may his comments mean? Can they reveal something more than his evident familiarity with Chinese classical learning and his resourcefulness in mobilizing it to criticize the Tran past? How should one try to make sense of a historian of the late fifteenth century when he writes about a time that had ended less than a century earlier?

His seventy-two comments are written in what I have come to describe as "teacherly language", or language appropriate for defining and judging behaviour. We must not forget that, in the Chinese-influenced tradition in which Lien was writing, the historian—and an officially appointed editor to boot—had few more serious duties than that of defining with exactitude what was right and wrong. Lien's language is densely packed with such tendentious expressions as "righteous duty", "humaneness", or "husband and wife relations", expressions evoking reminiscences of Chinese classical wisdom. Whenever possible, he warns that bad behaviour results sooner or later in retribution. He, as Vietnamese had been doing for centuries, cites passages from Chinese writing to lend rhetorical support to his own statements; his comments are peppered with references to the dynasties and rulers of "Chinese antiquity" or to "the Former Sages" or "the men of old". But his chief teaching device—and the comments' major structural feature—is his frequent juxtaposition of edifying axioms, drawn from Chinese classical literature, and what he considers as examples of deviant Vietnamese behaviour. In this way he is able to contrast proper and defective standards of conduct. When a comment contains an axiom it is functioning with its maximum didactic effect and is likely to contain an unacknowledged passage from Mencius, the teacher of government.³

Lien's comments mount a sustained criticism, vehement as well as explicit. He is an emphatic teacher and likes to state that something is "exceedingly" improper or wrong. He is fond of exclamatory particles, a device that conveys the impression that he is shouting at me to voice his sense of outrage. I also hear his voice when his comments demand

I have used the following *TT* text, collated by Ch'en Chingho: (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Toyo Bunka Kênkyôjo, 1984–86). Lien's comments immediately follow the *TT*'s relevant entries. In order to reduce the number of notes, references to Lien's comments in the *TT* are indicated by the relevant year in my text. Lien sometimes comments more than once on events in a particular year, and this is indicated by, for example, 1251/1 or 1251/2. Notes 18 and 34 list key terms in Lien's comments.

³ Lien uses, for example, Mencius's expression "the Kingly Way". See O.W. Wolters, *Two Essays on Dai-Viet in the Fourteenth Century*, Lac-Viet series, no. 9 (New Haven: Yale Southeast Asia Studies, 1988), p. 148, n. 212, where I note appeals to Mencius's authority in Tran times though for less elaborate reasons than Lien's.

that I should "behold" or "see" entries in the Annals on which he feels compelled to express his indignation.

These are some of his literary devices to enable him to plot his story of the Tran dynasty. The story is a sombre one: the dynasty's squalid rise, brief apogee, prolonged decline, and ignominious but foretold collapse. His seventy-two comments on entries in the Annals represent what he is teaching: how not to found an imperial dynasty, how not to rule, but how to fall.

At first sight the comments may seem tedious when they are not pompous. His story begins with the Tran family's disgraceful disregard for "humane" conduct and for correct husband-and-wife relationships when, in 1226 and the following years, it was seizing and consolidating control of the state. The young emperor's uncle, the strongman who dominated the early years of the new dynasty, did not hesitate to compel the last ruler of the previous Ly dynasty to commit suicide in spite of his having already abdicated and given his daughter in marriage to Thai-ton, the young Tran prince chosen by his family to ascend the vacant throne.⁴ Lien, mindful of Mencius's teaching, exclaims that this was an "exceptionally inhumane deed".⁵ Thus, the dynasty was founded by an act of regicide. To make matters even worse, the murderer married his victim's widow and buried alive the surviving members of the Ly family so that people would no longer think about them.

The plot thickens when Lien begins to note that Tran immorality was not limited to its treatment of the previous ruling family. Within their own family members of the Tran clan showed an indifference to proper human relationships by contracting a series of appalling marriages. For example, in 1237 Thai-ton was persuaded by his uncle, the strongman Tran Thu Do, to marry his elder brother's pregnant wife because she was evidently capable of bearing children and therefore of providing him with an heir; twenty-one years later he gave his former wife to a subordinate as a reward for exploits during the first Mongol invasion. Even worse, the Tran princes habitually married Tran princesses. These disgraceful family relationships were imitated by others (1251/1).

There were also serious lapses in good manners and social usage. Noting unruly conduct at a court feast in 1251, when the censor made a fool

⁴ According to Tran protocol, the first ruler was "the senior emperor", Tran Thua, and his son and heir, posthumously known as Tran Thai-ton, was the "emperor". Thai-ton succeeded his father in 1234, asserted his authority over his uncle in 1237, and thereafter became the first effective Tran ruler.

⁵ Lien follows Mencius's explanation of how the Three Dynasties (of Chinese antiquity) gained the empire through humaneness and lost it through cruelty. James Legge, trans. and ed., *The Four Books. Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, The Doctrine of the Mean, and The Works of Mencius* (Shanghai: The Chinese Book Company, n.d.), p. 695; D.C. Lau, trans., *Mencius* (reprint, n.p.: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 119.

of himself, Lien exclaims: "Behold this! When the ruler and his Court took pleasure together, they were not controlled by the rules of rites. . . . There was no restraint". He feels so strongly that he reinforces his comment by quoting Confucius's disciple: "If harmony itself is not modulated by ritual, things will still go amiss".⁶ Lien goes on to insist that "if the censor does not speak out, will not this be a source of wrong at Court?" (1251/2). He is threatening retribution.

According to Lien, then, the origins of the Tran dynasty—corresponding with the first reign—were flawed.⁷ For the forty years after 1277, when the first ruler died, the record improved, and Lien's comments now focus on what he regards as some admirable, though short-lived, features of Tran government that relieve an otherwise sordid story. He attaches the highest importance to the joint "planning" of the affairs of state. The emperors "planned" successfully during the Mongol wars of the 1280s. This happier period, extending until the emperor Anh-ton's death in 1320, is the only time when Lien can praise the Tran Court. The rulers were energetic and, equally important, appointed talented subordinates to office.

But the remarkable feature of his comments on this short-lived period—and the feature that explains why Lien judges it to be the apogee of Tran rule—is his presentation of the emperor Anh-ton himself (1293–1320). One must bear in mind that the scope of his comments is usually limited by what happened to be recorded in the Annals; he has to pounce on materials that serve his didactic purpose.⁸ In Anh-ton's case he brings together a few random details about the ruler's behaviour to construct a vision of a proper emperor, and no detail is more congenial to him than a long account of Anh-ton's drunkenness. His father threatened to disinherit him, and he had to repent and reform. His filial response to the threat is precisely the kind of detail that enables Lien to teach what it means to be an ideal ruler.

His comment on the occasion of Anh-ton's death in 1320 begins with an axiom attributable to Mencius: "There is a common expression, 'the Empire, the state, the family'. The Empire has its basis in the state, the state in the family, and the family in one's own self".⁹ Lien goes on to insist that, when the family is instructed, the people of the state can certainly be instructed. "Even under the rule of Yao and Shun [legendary rulers

⁶ Legge, *Confucian Analects*, p. 9; Arthur Waley, trans., *The Analects of Confucius* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1938), p. 86.

⁷ viz. the reigns of Thai-ton and his father from 1226 to 1277. Thai-ton became "senior emperor" in 1258 and died in 1277.

⁸ Occasionally Lien introduces additional material. An example is in his comment of 1259 on Linh-tu, the widow of the last Ly ruler and wife of the strongman who presided over the early years of the Tran dynasty.

⁹ Legge, *Works of Mencius*, pp. 697–98; Lau, *Mencius*, p. 120.

in China's golden age] there was no more than this". Lien then notes the entry in the Annals that states that the youthful Anh-ton promised his father never to get drunk again; the entry enables Lien once more to compare Anh-ton with Yao and Shun. Lien goes on to praise Anh-ton for honouring his ancestors. He now makes a major statement: "Because his family (under his leadership) set a perfect example, those outside it emulated it. His government was entirely enlightened and the ordinary people prospered exceedingly. Is not this because he strenuously regulated himself as the foundation for putting his family in order?" Lien concludes his encomium by conferring on Anh-ton the supreme compliment: "Can anything more than this be added from what is praised in the *Book of Songs* and the *Book of History* [two exceedingly famous Chinese canonical texts]?" Such is Lien's didactic zeal that he manages to praise Anh-ton by maximizing the significance of a few personal details tucked away in the Annals.

Yet not all was satisfactory even during the apogee of Tran rule. For example, in connection with a disorderly burial ceremony in 1310, Lien observes that a court, as a matter of principle, needs to be "strict instead of being excessively lenient". The lack of honour accorded to chaste widows was another instance in which proper behaviour, necessary "in order to encourage later generations" (1295), was neglected in this period. Anh-ton's father was a worthy ruler who worked successfully with his heir and subordinates during the Mongol invasions. Yet he, too, had a fault: he entered a Buddhist retreat, improper conduct for those who observe normal behaviour (1308).

The moral defects that shamed the early decades of the dynasty reappeared when the ruling family began to go into decline after Anh-ton's death in 1320. The relations between the sexes continued to deviate from the norms of good social behaviour. In 1371 a Tran princess, still in official mourning for her husband's death, was married off to Le Quy Ly, the emperor Nghe-ton's brother-in-law and future usurper: "To thrust aside the husband-wife relationship is to disturb the Way of the Three Human Bonds. When this happens, is not rebellion bound to break out?"¹⁰ In 1373 the emperor's dead wife was given the same posthumous name accorded to an empress more than a century before. Lien is outraged: "The Early Kings [of Chinese antiquity] instituted rules and ceremonies for the sake of human feelings. In view of this posthumous name, how could human

¹⁰ "The Three Human Bonds"—those of ruler and subject, father and son, and husband and wife—is the term of the Former Han scholar Tung Chung-shu for the ethics that underlie society as a whole. Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, Vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), p. 42.

feelings be at ease? This was an exceedingly serious breach of rites and ceremonies".¹¹

But worse was now happening on which Lien feels obliged to comment. Not only were these later imperial marriages scandalous; the emperors were also improvident and especially when providing for the imperial succession. An emperor in 1328, instead of considering various options open to him when his empress had still not borne an heir, was persuaded to kill his father-in-law, who had urged him to be patient, and appoint a secondary wife's son as heir. In 1369 another emperor died without appointing an heir and almost brought his dynasty down by giving a usurper his chance. Most important of all from the point of view of dynastic security, the emperor Nghe-ton, the last long-lived Tran ruler, was "careless" and did not realize that his son-in-law, Le Quy Ly, intended to usurp. "Wise men must discern early the schemes of disobedient officials" (1387). Nghe-ton's character embodied everything Lien loathes. He was indifferent to proper marriage relations; he was imprudent; he was not steadfast; he was a coward.

When the dynasty was going into decline, the need for efficient and loyal subordinates would be of the greatest consequence. This was the lesson of history that the later Tran years illustrated most vividly and a matter of great concern to Lien. He can find, however, only one example of a talented subordinate, Chu Van An.¹² But Chu Van An was frustrated and resigned. His death in 1370 is the occasion for one of Lien's longest and most emotional comments. During the four hundred years of Ly and Tran rule, he finds only one official, in Ly times, who "won his ruler's confidence". Lien takes the opportunity of defaming characteristic types of Vietnamese officials: those who sought merit and reputation and those who grasped after emoluments for their own sake.¹³ He can find none, with the exception of Chu Van An, "who were concerned with morality when exerting themselves on behalf of their ruler to benefit the people".¹⁴ Here Lien is discharging his responsibility of defining the criteria of good government. He does likewise in his other very long comment, that of

¹¹ Fung Yu-lan discusses the relationship of rites and ceremonies and human feelings in *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, Vol. 1, pp. 337 ff. He quotes the *Li-chi* as stating that "ceremonies, following human feelings, act as regulators, refiners of them, so as to keep the people within bounds" (p. 338).

¹² The son of an Overseas Chinese, according to my friend Tran Quoc Vuong, in a personal communication during his Rockefeller Fellowship at Cornell in 1990-91.

¹³ Lien would recall that Confucius taught: "In serving one's prince one should be intent upon the task and not bent upon the pay"; Legge, *Works of Mencius*, p. 235; Waley, *Analects of Confucius*, p. 201.

¹⁴ The expression "benefiting the people" is reminiscent of what Mencius teaches to be the purpose of rendering advice to a ruler, as Chu Van An tried unsuccessfully to do; Legge, *Works of Mencius*, pp. 734-35; Lau, *Mencius*, pp. 128-29.

1328, when he criticizes the emperor for allowing himself to bungle the appointment of an heir by listening to a bad official. In this comment he defines unambiguously what he expects of an official: "to be entirely loyal in remonstrating in order to enable his ruler to be a Yao and Shun".¹⁵ He ends his comment of 1328 with an axiom: "Therefore a ruler, when he appoints a talented man to a post, must examine him lest he be a mean man". A "mean man" is the opposite of a "Gentleman", defined by Lien several times. In a comment in respect of 1025, the "Gentleman" is contrasted with the monk; the monk claims the power of prophesy, turns his back on society, repudiates the world, and meditates to achieve peace. The Gentleman would have none of this. In respect of 1378, when a brave official curses a Cham invader and dies for his pains, Lien, probably adapting a passage in Mencius, asserts that "The Gentleman does not seek life".¹⁶ And again, in a comment of 1390 on a Tran prince, Nguyen Dan, who fell short of Lien's standards, he states: "To conform with what is right and not to plan for one's profit, to understand the Way and not to calculate merit. This is the mind of a Gentleman".¹⁷ Finally, "one who is not a Gentleman acts according to his advantage" (1335/2).

What would Lien suppose would be the effectiveness of the example of such "gentlemen"? His "teacherly" language—be it in the form of axioms, rhetoric, or use of words with didactic associations—suggests the answer. Recurrent instances reflect his concern with good behaviour; three requirements are particularly prominent in what one can refer to as the semiotic web of the seventy-two comments: personal self-control, an impersonal and "duty"-oriented attitude towards the state and society, and the strict regulation of every aspect of political and social relationships. Indeed, most of the recurrent didactic language in Lien's semiotic web signifies the exercise of public and personal control or the administering of rules and laws.¹⁸ If one were to search for two words to convey the force of his teacherly language, they would be "regulation" and "strictness", notions emphasized in Chinese classical texts and used repeatedly by Lien to demonstrate how the values of educated officials would make

¹⁵ Mencius states: "I have never dared to put before the King anything short of the Way of Yao and Shun"; Legge, *Works of Mencius*, p. 566; Lau, *Mencius*, p. 86.

¹⁶ Legge, *Works of Mencius*, pp. 874–76; Lau, *Mencius*, p. 166.

¹⁷ These words are from the chapter on Tung Chung-shu in the *Former Han History* but refer to the "humane man" and not the "Gentleman"; see *The Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Chinese Language*, 10 vols (Taipei: China Academy, 1979), Vol. 5, p. 617.

¹⁸ For equivalences of public or personal "control": rites and ceremonies/decorum 禮; to practise moral behaviour 修; regulate 節; discipline 綱; restrain 拘; caution 懼; steadfast 剛; integrity 信; temperate 儉; human relations 人倫; the Three Bonds 三綱; humane-ness 仁; duty 義; Gentleman 君子.

For equivalences of the administration of rules and laws: punishment 刑; strict 嚴; impressive 威; discerning 辨.

an impression on court and society provided that "Gentlemen" were available and their rulers listened to them. This never happened in Tran times.

I have tried to convey the tone of Lien's comments on the Tran reigns. I shall now begin to consider what he may mean.

At all events he is insisting at every opportunity that, in Tran times, his country's "appearance" was unacceptable. By "appearance" I mean how the court's conduct of affairs appears in the eyes of one who is always fretfully comparing what he sees with what is recorded about Chinese antiquity. And so from time to time he urges his readers to "behold" or "see" certain passages in the *Annals*: "Behold the censor Quoc Ke's words. Not only are they of superficial learning; they are also coarse" (1290/2). This is why his text is peppered with such expressions as "improper", "incorrect", or "wrong" and why he sometimes adds that something is "exceedingly" so.

Yet when, rarely, the "appearance" resembles what Lien considers to be standards proclaimed in books about Chinese antiquity, his pride is unbounded. Praising the emperor Anh-ton, he exclaims: "Can anything more than this be added to what is praised in the *Book of Songs* and the *Book of History*?" (1320/2). Lien always wants his country to appear to be conforming with Chinese bookish standards, and officials in Tran times should have insisted on this. They did not do so, and the court's appearance suffered grievously. The presence of bad officials always sullies the court's appearance, and there were too many of them in Tran times. Whether in China itself many ever behaved at any time as Lien supposed their classical heritage would persuade them to behave is a question on which I cannot comment.

Lien's concern with "appearance" might be no more than pedantic and trivial affectation. Yet I believe that something of importance was at stake.

Already in the thirteenth century, significance had been attached to the court's appearance. Taunted by Kublai Khan's claims to sovereignty, the historian Le Van Huu, to the satisfaction of the court, defined Vietnam's independent status by latching on to a Chinese admission in an ancient text that a Chinese warlord in Canton (who died in 137 BCE and came to be honoured as the founder of the Vietnamese "empire") held sway in a court whose ceremonial chariot replicated that of a Han emperor and thereby signified the Canton warlord's independent imperial status.¹⁹ The external appearance of an imperial court and especially the assumption of the imperial title were, and probably had been for a long time, metaphors

¹⁹ See the Vietnamese *Annals* under the date of 181 BCE. I broached this subject in "Historians and Emperors in Vietnam and China" in *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, Southeast Asia publications series, no. 4, ed. Anthony Reid and David Marr (Singapore: Heinemann Educational Books [Asia] for the ASAA, 1979), pp. 69–89.

for independence and perhaps a guarantee of a durable and presumably strong system of government fortified by the Chinese dynastic concept.

By Lien's time, two centuries later, this rather limited notion of the significance of an "imperial appearance" was taken for granted.²⁰ Lien's definition goes beyond the context of external relations and is much more ramified. He evaluates the personal behaviour of the ruling family and its officials and stresses the importance of the ruler's example. Appearance has to be judged from within the country.

I shall now go a stage further in probing the meaning of Lien's comments. I suggest that he is insisting that the Vietnamese polity's correct appearance would reflect internal strength. In the thirteenth century, according to Le Van Huu, a country's security depended on prudent diplomatic relations with China, which meant paying tribute while pretending that it did not matter. In Lien's eyes much more is necessary, and he elaborates the connection between appearance and strength to include the moral example of a disciplined ruling family, cooperation between rulers and officials, and the consequence for society of a strictly regulated dynastic court that adhered to acceptable norms of behaviour set forth in the Chinese Confucianist canon. Anyone familiar with Chinese teaching on good manners and social usage, as Lien was, would have no difficulty in making the connection between rites and ceremonies and the control of human feelings and social discipline.²¹ And so it is that the strands in Lien's semiotic web so often signify "regulation" and "strictness".

"Appearance" now becomes the equivalence of a disciplined government and state, and the proof is that, in Lien's comments, immoral or otherwise improper behaviour always brings retribution and weakens the country. Heaven punished the regicide that accompanied the Tran accession with the suicide of the last Tran ruler (1226/1). Titles create appearance; Lien therefore objects to an unusually illustrious title conferred on the first ruler's elder brother in 1234 and suggests that it was then that the brother began to nurture treasonable intentions (in fact, the prince rebelled a few years later because the ruler had stolen his pregnant wife). Or again, in the fourteenth century, the nomination of imperial heirs was, in Lien's view, dangerously neglected, mishandled, or postponed. No proper imperial court, according to Lien, is without an heir who was appointed as early as possible.²²

Another and especially grave source of weakness associated with the court's imperfect appearance was the absence of officials who were willing

²⁰ For example, Nguyen Trai, "Great Proclamation upon the Pacification of the Wu", issued in 1428 after the defeat of the Ming (ibid., p. 88).

²¹ See Fung Yu-lan, *History of Chinese Philosophy*, Vol. 1, p. 338.

²² See his comments of 1328 and 1369.

to dissuade the ruler from adopting measures that would harm him: "Loyal words always grate on a ruler's ears but always benefit him" (1377). He gives as an example an emperor who ignored such words and was killed in a war that should never have been fought. Lien attributes the victories over the Mongols not so much to bravery as to the joint planning of rulers and officials, the style of government expected in a proper imperial court. From his point of view, the Mongol invasions were the supreme challenge to Vietnam's strength in Tran times and were met by the country's maximum strength, signified by the appearance of rulers and officials planning together. "Integrity" is the state's "treasured possession" and induces people to submit: "It is the basis of kingly government".²³ Lien observes that the founder of his own dynasty knew this when he allowed his Ming prisoners to be repatriated, whereas the Hung-dao prince, the hero of the Mongol wars, killed the Mongol prisoners he had promised to send home. Or again, when a court censor does not expostulate during an unruly court occasion, this will be a source of evil (1251/2).

Lien's association of strength with acceptable appearance is most dramatically illustrated during the final decades of Tran rule, when the dynasty and country were ruled by a weak emperor, Nghe-ton, who had relaxed his hold on the government even though the country was tormented by Cham invasions from the south and a usurper was waiting in the wings. In 1379 valuable materials were hidden away in remote hills for protection from the Chams. Lien voices his disgust by drawing without acknowledgement on Mencius's sketch of a good ruler. When the Son of Heaven prospers, asserts Lien, his "granaries are full". Mencius and Lien continue: "A ruler takes advantage of times of peace to explain the laws to the people".²⁴ Lien again borrows from Mencius to teach that a Son of Heaven must be prepared for all eventualities.²⁵ The extent of Lien's debt to Mencius is reflected in the way he concludes his description of a proper Son of Heaven: such a ruler would not be treated with "insolence".²⁶ Nghe-ton was a very different Son of Heaven, and Lien's judgment is cruel. After reading the entry about the removal of the treasure to security, he concludes that later generations would mock and consider

²³ 1289. Lien may have Confucius's teaching in mind; see Legge, *Confucian Analects*, p. 162; Waley, *Analects of Confucius*, p. 164: "... a people that no longer trusts its rulers is lost indeed".

²⁴ The passages quoted are common to Lien and Mencius: Legge, *Works of Mencius*, pp. 503 and 542; Lau, *Mencius*, pp. 70 and 81. Lien surely knew and relished Mencius's next observation: "Even large States will then certainly stand in awe of him".

²⁵ Mencius and Lien use the *Book of Songs*' metaphor of the skin of the mulberry tree roots for "preparedness"; Legge, pp. 542-43; Lau, p. 81. Lien's comment of 1371/1 deplors Vietnam's failure to anticipate the Chams' retaliatory invasion that year.

²⁶ Mencius had quoted Confucius's comment on an excerpt from the *Book of Songs* that a well-prepared ruler would not be treated with insolence: Lau, *Mencius*, p. 81.

that "there was no man in the State". He is expressing his sorrow with an unacknowledged reminiscence of Ch'u Yuan's famous elegy on encountering sorrows.²⁷

Lien's comment of 1379 expresses his teaching vividly. A genuine emperor—and each Vietnamese ruler claimed to be one—must be defined by standards laid down in Chinese antiquity. He would then be strong because he enforced the laws and held the country in readiness for emergencies. The appearance of such a state would not cause ridicule.²⁸

My reading of the meaning of Lien's comments may be far-fetched and unconvincing. Is Lien really justified, for example, in complaining that an emperor's burial was postponed for four years when it should have been undertaken seven months after his death?²⁹ This may have been so in China but surely not in Vietnam. Is Lien's association of appearance with strength specious? Or may he mean something more?

Lien could, of course, have misunderstood and smothered the historical situation in Tran times because, by his day, a cultural gap had been created between him and the past as a result of a new style of education and government, for which the Ming occupation early in the fifteenth century was responsible.³⁰ In one comment he praises Chu Hsi for rescuing the Confucian teachings from their fractured condition after Mencius died (1396). If this is how I should read his comments, his intention would simply be to savage the previous dynasty by directing his invective against what he considered to be its un-Confucianist appearance. If so, I could dismiss him as a carping pedant, a source on fifteenth-century Vietnam but certainly no historian.

But an alternative reading is available. Lien understood the situation in Tran times only too well because he was an educated Vietnamese, whose memories of the recent past, upbringing, and career situated

²⁷ The expression "there is no man in the State" is from the last verse in Ch'u Yuan's famous work, *Ch'u Yuan, The Li Sao: An Elegy on Encountering Sorrows* . . . , trans. Lim Boon Keng (Shanghai: Commercial Press Ltd, 1929), pp. 98–99. It seems appropriate, in a volume in honour of Jennifer Cushman, to mention that Lim Boon Keng was a distinguished Singapore Overseas Chinese who became the first president of Xiamen University.

²⁸ In his comment of 1389/1 Lien notes that Nghe-ton did not punish Le Quy Ly for cowardice when fighting the Chams and observes that, in Chinese antiquity, after the defeat in the battle of Ch'eng P'u the ruler of Ch'u killed someone—albeit unjustly—but "became stronger day by day because strict commands were put into effect". Lien is adapting a passage in the *Tso chuan*; James Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics*, Vol. 5, Part 1 (Hong Kong: Lane Crawford & Co., 1872; Reprinted Beijing: 1939) pp. 209–10. In a comment of 1380 Lien states that he would have executed a traitor mentioned in the *Annals*.

²⁹ 1344. According to Chu Hsi, "a trifling error leads to a mistake of a thousand miles"; Fung Yu-lan, *History of Chinese Philosophy*, Vol. 2, p. 564.

³⁰ See John K. Whitmore, *Vietnam, Ho Quy Ly, and the Ming (1371–1421)*, Lac-Viet series, no. 2 (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, Council on Southeast Asia Studies, 1985), chap. 6 and especially pp. 121–26 and 130–31.

him firmly within his culture. If so, his intention would be to warn his contemporaries, just as the Tran Annals had warned him, that what he regarded as weaknesses in the earlier style of public life could re-assert themselves at any time. If this was what he feared might happen, he would be obliged to insist that the country was plagued by inherent characteristics, strikingly illustrated in the Tran record. An understanding of his intention on these lines would explain the vehemence of his comments and his emphasis on retribution when behaviour was improper. In other words, instead of being a querulous bore, he would become a privileged source of information for studying Vietnamese history in earlier times.

And so the question can now be: what else may Lien mean? To put the question in another way, can one see through the "appearance" that obsesses him and discern, at least in outline, something that, not long before Lien's time, could correspond with Vietnam's "countenance"? The word "countenance" appeals to me because its root connotes "holding together". How, in this context, did the earlier system "maintain" (hold in its hand) a particular style of government, that cohered, made sense, and worked and could do so without the support Lien wanted to bring to it so that it would be "a proper imperial State"? Perhaps Lien could criticize "appearance" and, at the same time, disclose features of the "countenance".

I shall suggest that what Lien deplores are not deviations from already established Chinese norms but still barely concealed signs of a cultural situation persisting over the centuries in Vietnam in spite of an age-long connection with China. What Lien, from a "Confucianist" perspective of the later fifteenth century, sees as weaknesses should be seen instead as the signs of a traditionally cohesive Vietnamese polity. Whether the polity was strong or weak is neither here nor there. That is Lien's problem and not mine, though I cannot help noting that, according to the Annals, the last surviving rebel of the Ly period saw the writing on the wall and submitted within three years of the Tran family's seizure of power. The annalist had attached sufficient significance to this event that he adds a few words of his own: "The empire became one again".³¹ Seventeen years later a country-wide census was completed in two months. And, of course, the Mongols were thrice expelled. The polity Lien criticizes was capable of supplying leadership. So, then, what else may Ngo Si Lien mean?

First I wish to recall the major structural feature of Lien's comments: the juxtaposition of edifying Chinese axioms and examples of deviant behaviour. I described the axioms' didactic language as a semiotic web, comprising the language of planning, regulation (if necessary, strict regulation), restraint, and a selfless code of conduct in an impersonal and

³¹ *TT* under the date of 1229.

rational world. This style of collective as well as individual behaviour, ratified by Chinese texts, would, in Lien's view, be the prescription for strong and good government. Indeed, in a comment he quotes Mencius as stating that "no one ever erred through following the example of the Former [Chinese] Kings".³²

But what Lien regards as deviant behaviour has its own semiotic web, or its own recurrent language. Before I note it, I wish to repeat that the historian in Lien's tradition had no more serious duty than defining with exactitude what was right and wrong. This means that, as Lien himself points out, the historian must be discriminating when he passes judgment.³³ He must be able to make the correct distinctions. I am therefore encouraged to expect that the distinctions he makes between good and bad behaviour in Tran times are anything but haphazard. I also assume with some confidence that the prominent figures who behaved badly by Lien's standards represented the prevailing style of public life during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Why, then, was their behaviour bad?

I shall ignore Lien's abusive language; some officials were of "the utmost bestiality", flatterers, slanderers, corrupt, or downright disloyal. What is significant is what Lien sees as the pervasive fault in Tran public life and the fault responsible for the court's unacceptable appearance: a relentless quest for merit when serving the ruler in order to enjoy a privileged relationship with him.

By "merit" in this context I mean public achievement intended to bring benefits in professional promotion. Lien rejects such a self-interested form of merit even when the rulers themselves would benefit from a meritorious official's achievements. For Lien the reward of achievement can only be satisfaction from the knowledge that one has done one's best.

Merit-earning, then, with its implications and consequences, is the fault around which Lien's other semiotic web is woven.³⁴ Here are some instances involving prominent figures in Tran history.

I have mentioned the fact that the Hung-dao prince, the famous general in the Mongol wars, murdered his prisoners after promising to repatriate them. In Lien's words, he wanted to enjoy immediate "merit", presumably by killing his country's enemies, at the cost of compromising his reputation for all time by breaking his word. Lien contrasts the quest for immediate "merit" with personal "integrity". Or again, the senior general, who many years earlier had reconciled the drunken Anh-ton with his

³² 1258/2; Legge, *Works of Mencius*, p. 688; Lau, *Mencius*, p. 117.

³³ In his comment of 981 Lien criticizes the thirteenth-century historian, Le Van Huu, for failing to be "discerning" when passing judgment on Le Dai Hanh for executing two officials who were "loyal and dutiful" to the former ruler.

³⁴ viz. merit 功; profit 利; selfish 私; arrogant 驕; mean man 小人; generous 寬; favour 恩.

father, lost his life as a result of imprudence on the battlefield because he sought great merit. His fault was that he was "arrogant", a fault contrasted by Confucius—quoted by Lien—with "due caution".³⁵ In both cases the quest for immediate merit was at the expense of something beyond compare: reputation and life itself. Another senior official was "conceited and arrogant" and "despised his colleagues". Lien again quotes Confucius: "If a man has gifts as wonderful as those of the Duke of Chou [an exemplary statesman in Chinese antiquity], yet is arrogant and mean, nothing else is worth beholding".³⁶ Here the contrast is between arrogance and modesty. "Arrogance" conjures up the notion of abrasive peer relations: backbiting and slander.

This is not the end of the implications or consequences of the merit-seeking motive. Another contrast is between "serving the ruler in order to benefit the people" and seeking a meritorious name, personal gain, or "saving one's skin". According to Lien, only Chu Van An in Tran times was not found wanting in this respect. Chu Van An was not a time-server. He resigned when the ruler refused to listen to him and thereby fulfilled his personal duty to his maximum capacity (1370/3). Merit-seeking is here contrasted with the highest form of honourable duty. Another comment states that one who is not a "Gentleman" looks to his profit; he is a "mean man" (1335/2). The Tran prince, Nguyen Dan, was not a "Gentleman" even though he had "learning". He chose personal "profit" to the neglect of his higher "duty" (1390).

But an excessive quest for personal merit and profit would be impossible without the rulers' complicity. The rulers would seek officials thus motivated because of their zeal and also because they could rule without having advice thrust on them by subordinates. Within these limits, court behaviour could be informal. Thus Lien blames the Tran rulers for being "too lenient" instead of being "sufficiently strict", strictness being the virtue necessary in regulating human intercourse, including the relationship between rulers and officials.³⁷ Customs were "simple" and without "restraint" (1251/2). He observes that the Tran rulers, like the Ly before them, "venerated the Buddha as the source of everything" (1231), a conviction that would have inclined them to show compassion and encourage generous tendencies.

³⁵ 1335/1. I have been guided by Waley's translation (*Analects of Confucius* pp. 124–25) especially in respect of "caution". Confucius's equivalence of "arrogance" is "without caring whether he lived or died". In his comment Lien notes that the merit-greedy Tzu Yu allowed himself to be ambushed at Ch'eng P'u. See note 28 above.

³⁶ 1372.

³⁷ 1310. This is not Lien's only context for "strictness". Teaching must also be "strict", no doubt because the observance of strict human relations depends on teaching. Lien praises Anh-ton and Chu Van An for being "strict" teachers.

Lien would have expected an interdependent relationship to exist between generous rulers and their zealous subordinates, who strove to be recipients of their rulers' generosity. Not surprisingly, the narrative in the Tran Annals reflects Lien's understanding of the situation.³⁸ Both parties interacted with each other in situations where relationships could be informal and personal. In this flexibly managed world of self-interest, no place would be needed for rigid codes of model behaviour or for "Gentlemen", whose every movement in public and private life, as Lien approvingly notes, was carefully defined for them from the time of their early education (1379). Similarly, no place would exist for Lien's paragons: selfless officials, remonstrating officials, officials who were content to serve in a court restrained by rites and ceremonies, and officials who wanted to transform their ruler into a "Yao or Shun".

Lien seems to recognize that the Tran rulers' mode of government made few demands on their staff beyond "loyalty" and was unchallenged by competing ideas about the purposes of government. The system he criticizes would make sense in a small country where the personality of energetic rulers could be rapidly communicated without the assistance of a complex bureaucracy. One would suppose that the rulers felt comfortable when they had at their disposal entourages of faithful dependants, bound to their service by personal ties. And indeed Lien objects strongly to the rulers' willingness to confer favours on illiterate men by appointing them to the key post of liaison staff between the court and the day-to-day administration (1288 and 1370/2). Entourages, comprising groups of faithful dependants, were all that were necessary to enable the court to maintain itself effectively. Court alignments and cliques would be the norm rather than the rules and decorum that Lien believed strengthened the government.

And so Lien's comments, shorn of their axioms and bile, encourage me to think more confidently about Tran government on these lines, and the Annals, read by Lien, support this view. When the dynasty was founded, a few senior Ly officials, defectors to the Tran family, were, to Lien's disgust (1224 and 1226/2), entrusted with the urgent task of restoring the fractured country to obedience. They were loyal henchmen. Lien condemns one of them for exercising vice-regal prerogatives (1226/2). The rulers' closest relatives, occupying the senior posts at court, constituted, with their own dependants, another entourage until their competence petered

³⁸ In this respect Lien's comments echo what I have described as a syntactically ordered "sentence" built into the Tran Annals that begins with the ruler's appointment of an official and ends with his "favour" as the result of the official's performance. "Possibilities for a Reading of the 1293–1357 Period in the Vietnamese Annals" in *Southeast Asia in the 9th to 14th Centuries*, ed. D.G. Marr and A.C. Milner (Singapore: ISEAS, 1986), pp. 372–73.

out in the fourteenth century. Veterans who had earned merit in the Mongol wars enjoyed privileges in the rulers' service—for instance, that hero of the first Mongol war of 1257 who was rewarded with the gift of his ruler's first wife, discarded because she was believed to be incapable of bearing him an heir. Cliques—sometimes vicious ones—were formed around princes (e.g. 1307 and 1328). Neighbourhoods were centres of special interest groups. Eunuchs were bound to the rulers' service in a particular way and entrusted with liaison duties between court and administrative staff. The scholar who drafted Anh-ton's letter of apology to his father for his drunkenness was continually promoted until he died recklessly in battle. In the final years of the dynasty the country was split between the ineffective supporters of the Tran family and those who chose to throw in their lot with the usurping Le Quy Ly, originally the ineffective emperor Nghe-ton's henchman.

Lien would be aware of other repugnant features in Tran times. Nothing indicates that the patriarchal family was sufficiently established to be a school for teaching obligations to society. The stories of the tutelary spirits in an early version of the *Viet-dien u-linh tap*, a text first compiled in mid-Tran times, suggest that the significant unit in society was not the family but a tract of supernaturally protected land, protected by its local spirit—often a dead hero—and worshipped by rulers and villagers alike.³⁹ Lien prefers to attribute the victories during the Mongol wars to the collaboration of rulers and subordinates, but the Tran rulers themselves chose to confer high honours on the spirits for their services during the wars. Lien provides few glimpses of the spirits' world, though he occasionally mentions dreams and portents to mock them as irrational approaches to Heaven's movements and warnings (1255, 1277). He also mentions the magical vapours whereby spirits would manifest themselves but again only to mock the notion that vapours could be tamed by humans as the strongman who founded the dynasty, Tran Thu Du, had supposed (1248). In the tales rulers are not judged according to the extent to which they resemble Yao or Shun or have "Gentlemen" in their court but as heroes who surmount tremendous dangers, earn the spirits' support, and attract to themselves those who are themselves heroic.

In the world of the spirits, unlike Lien's order of things, predictability is not associated with the consequences of immoral behaviour or based on a correct understanding of natural phenomena; rather, it is linked with the invariably benign results of alliances between rulers and friendly spirits. Historical experience, recorded in these tales, teaches that, when these alliances are formed during crises, victory is "certainly" achieved just as

³⁹ Ly Te Xuyen, *Viet-dien u-linh tap* (EFEO A 47). I comment on this version in the Preface to *Dai-Viet in the Fourteenth Century*.

the spirits promise. The “discerning” ruler is not one who, according to Lien, can unmask his enemy or appoint “Gentlemen” to his service;⁴⁰ instead, he is one who can sense the presence of supernatural power in a tract of land and can test the spirits’ claims to be able to help him.

This, I suggest, was the general shape of the society to which the Tran family comfortably belonged, and it is also the shape that helps me put what worried Lien into a more probable perspective: the Tran version of the dynastic institution. When Lien denounces the rulers for presiding over only a shabby version of a genuine and allegedly strong “imperial State”, I believe that he is worrying about what was still a relatively fragile—perhaps almost marginal—feature of Vietnamese public life. When he condemns the Tran family’s irregular marriages—intended to exclude from the centre of the Court those who did not belong to the family—he is choosing to condemn successful expedients improvised on the spur of the moment to protect the ruling family at a time when the dynastic tradition was not yet secure. The rulers were continually having to compensate for the institution’s weakness. Nothing in the Annals or any other source suggests that there was a ground swell of support (a Mandate of Heaven) for the Tran when they seized power. In fact, a change of dynasty had never happened before, which may explain why the Annals record a lingering respect for the fallen ruling family in the first years of Tran rule. Lien thought that the dynasty should have been strengthened in terms of its ideology. The Tran rulers preferred to do so by means of their marriage beds. In order to protect their dynasty from consequences of the family feud fired in 1237 by the ruler’s seizure of his elder brother’s pregnant wife, they married their heirs to Tran princesses directly descended from the elder brother, appointed them as “emperors” as soon as they were mature, and then went through the fiction of “abdicating” in their heirs’ favour so that plots against them would be tantamount to treason. They surrounded themselves at court with their senior relatives, almost invariably loyal men. On top of all this the majority of the rulers were Patriarchs of the meditative school of Mahayana Buddhism in a land where the monkhood still enjoyed great respect. In all these ways the Tran family was able to satisfy the single indispensable requisite of any dynasty, which is continuity and something altogether more important than anything Lien wanted to impose on it. The Tran rulers could hold on to their authority in spite of what Lien regarded as a defective dynastic system.

And now to conclude: why have I become interested in Lien? I am well aware that Lien calls attention to aspects of the Tran “countenance” by

⁴⁰ Lien regards “discernment” as the attribute of a good ruler; see his comments of 1290/1, 1387, 1394.

no means unfamiliar to any who study the period and, perhaps in some respects, recognizable by those who study other parts of early Southeast Asia: a concern for immediate rather than future goals, reliance on personal relationships, relaxed public behaviour, the agency of "favour" and "merit", marriage alliances, entourages, a hands-off attitude towards villagers unless taxes and conscription were involved, the pervasive influence of Buddhism—something to be taught—and a universal respect for the spirits of the soil. None of this is unfamiliar. What has interested me is how Lien presents these familiar features and the implications of his presentation. Obviously he is seeing differences between Tran performance and acceptable performance, but what is the scale of the differences? I believe that one can squeeze just one more drop of meaning from his comments in order to delineate the "countenance" of Tran Vietnam more sharply.

I suggest that he expresses the differences in language that requires one to think less in terms of difference than of stark opposition. Lien meticulously formulates two binary oppositions at the very heart of Confucian ideology: self-interested merit-earning is opposed to personal "integrity" (1289); merit-earning for the sake of profit is opposed to a sense of personal "duty" to the limit of one's capacity (1390, 1388/2). The ideological prestige of the second opposition—profit and honourable duty—is reflected in the fact that it is formulated at the very beginning of the *Book of Mencius*: "Why", exclaims Mencius, "must you speak of profit? There is, instead, humaneness and honourable duty, and that is all".⁴¹ Lien is identifying central aspects of the Confucian canon and, in doing so, articulates two utterly distinct modes of personal behaviour, behaviour that would animate society in correspondingly distinct ways. Predictably, his understanding of Tran times is informed by further oppositions: "arrogance" and "caution"; monks and "Gentlemen"; "mean men" and "Gentlemen"; "regicide" and "humaneness"; prohibited marriages and correct husband-wife relations; leniency and strictness; informality and regulated behaviour. These are faults responsible for the appearance of ridiculous weakness instead of impressive strength. Moreover, and very important for an understanding of Tran times, one could be literate and educated without being a "Gentleman"; one could be familiar with "Confucian" learning without having to live according to its precepts. One could have "learning" without being "humane" (1390). As Lien puts it, "there have been not a few of our Viet scholars employed by the rulers from time to time", but he goes on to impugn their ignoble motives when in public life (1370/3). He is able to identify very few "Gentlemen", and none of them were successful. He even chooses to ignore the few who, in the second half of the fourteenth century, defied tradition and took the

⁴¹ Legge, *Works of Mencius*, p. 430; Lau, *Mencius*, p. 49. I have adopted Dr de Crespigny's vigorous rendering of this passage.

initiative in urging the rulers to control the villagers and provide schools so that the villagers' children would learn their family responsibilities. I have regarded this initiative as a "watershed" in Vietnamese history and continue to do so;⁴² I can only suppose that Lien ignored it because he had no evidence that, in other respects, the officials in question conformed to his standards of personal behaviour. His refusal to recognize anything unusual in their behaviour makes his distinction between Tran and his own times even sharper.

So stark and fundamental are the oppositions between Lien's axiomatic standards of behaviour and the still only recent Tran realities he repudiates that one seems to be in the presence of two entirely different or barely overlapping systems. Here would be the answer to the question: "what else may Lien mean?" He means to distinguish, systematically and emphatically, two historical situations and on a scale that suggests a major discontinuity in Vietnamese history between the Tran period and the later fifteenth century, the situation with which he was personally familiar. Perhaps his perspective can assist historians when they look backwards and forwards from the end of Tran times in 1400.

He emphasizes these distinctions because he is pleading for a new and what he would consider a superior type of official, who lives according to what he regards as the highest moral standards of personal motivation. But, by implication, he also means—and could it be otherwise?—to praise the example of his own emperor who commissioned him, a representative of the new men, to edit the Annals and who was, indeed, employing other new men. In the final reckoning the ruler was bound to be the essential element in the new situation. Now and only now Vietnamese could expect to live in a stable and rationally motivated world, and this was probably his underlying concern. Provided that the situation held, Lien hopes that the Tran travesty of government would never again deface Vietnam's appearance. But his comments are sufficiently vehement and contain sufficient warnings of retribution to suggest that he believes that the old system remained a potential threat and that vigilance was needed to prevent its recrudescence. His comments on the earlier Ly dynasty of the eleventh and twelfth centuries are less harsh, and the reason would be that it was much more distant in time and therefore a less dangerous influence.⁴³ He knew, too, that there was still no established body of opinion to keep endemic weaknesses in check by appealing to an established record of "Confucianist" contributions to the country's well-being; in fact there was

⁴² "Assertions of Cultural Well-being in Fourteenth Century Vietnam", originally published in 1979 and 1980 and again in 1988 in Wolters, *Dai-Viet in the fourteenth century*, p. 118 ff.

⁴³ Moreover, Lien considered that the Ly dynasty was founded with "humaneness" (1226/1).

no such record. Only a ruler could check those weaknesses, and Lien's own ruler was the first to wish to do so. Lien had no reason to be confident about the future. I suspect that his comments are those of a nervous man. He may even have feared that the world in which he lived was unstable; indeed it fell apart not long after Lien's ruler died at the end of the fifteenth century.

"What else he means" is, I suggest, on these lines, and the effect is that he intentionally—though in a polemical way⁴⁴—provides one person's definition of Tran political culture: its "countenance". I, at least, am prepared to accept this as the perception of someone within the culture and, to that extent, a privileged source for studying earlier Vietnamese history. The "countenance" need not be inaccessible in spite of Lien's obsession with "appearance". Lien, at least, might agree, and he had everything to lose if his warnings went unheeded.

Postscript

Reading texts is time-consuming. One never knows what may turn up. Over the years I seem to stumble on what I understand to be accumulating signs of change in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The first is in the second half of the fourteenth century when, under pressure of internal unrest caused by hardship in the countryside as a result of natural disasters and princely greed, commoners in the rulers' service, as I recalled above, broke with tradition by presuming to advise the rulers to accept their recommendations. A further change accompanied this development; a Vietnamese "antiquity" was fabricated as a metaphor for a nostalgically remembered recent past, so different from the troubled present. Interestingly, what was affectionately remembered includes the period idealized by Lien: the emperor Anh-ton's reign.⁴⁵ Another sign of change is the updating in the later fourteenth or fifteenth centuries of the stories about the spirits in order to reinforce the plea of the worried officials and their successors that restless villagers needed to be taught to practise strict family discipline and therefore social discipline. The background was again one of social unrest.⁴⁶ And in this essay I have tried to present a changed

⁴⁴ An instance of polemical zeal may be his ignoring the Annals' long and favourable obituary notice of the strongman, Tran Thu Do, who died in 1264. The annalist represents Thu Do as teaching and demonstrating the need to avoid personal favours in public life, behaviour that Lien would find congenial. But for Lien, Thu Do remained the man who committed regicide in 1226.

⁴⁵ Wolters, "Possibilities for a Reading", pp. 394–96. The annalist Phan Phu Tien also associates the earlier years of Anh-ton's successor's reign, Minh-ton's, with good government.

⁴⁶ Wolters, *Dai-Viet in the Fourteenth Century*, p. xxix, where I comment on a later version of the *Viet-dien u-linh tap*, known as A 751.

conception of what should be the state's "appearance"; it had to signify the strength of "a proper imperial State", served by "gentlemen" who would not turn their back on society's problems. The impetus can again be attributed to the need for a sterner approach to the state's social problems.

These signs of change reflect how educated Vietnamese were becoming increasingly attracted to what they believed to be the Chinese example of strong government, and the result is another stark opposition: the villagers' right to be left alone and a blueprint for the absolute control of society. If I may end irresponsibly, some of us may regret that Ngo Si Lien was urging the Vietnamese elite to repudiate the earlier way of life. We would do so because the way of life he repudiates may have been less tense, less rigorous, more flexible, and more open-minded, and could have stood future generations in good stead when the time eventually came for them to cope with the Western world as well as with China.

Tycoons and Warlords: Modern Thai Social Formations and Chinese Historical Romance¹

Craig J. Reynolds

Given its immense popularity in Bangkok today, its wickedly funny uses to lampoon military politicians, and its capacity to offer ruthless advice to up-and-coming business executives, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi*) is surely more than just a fable about the unity and dismemberment of an ancient Chinese empire. The romance, which tells the tale of the last years of the Later Han and the more than two decades of interdynastic turmoil until the partial reunification under the state of Qin (265 CE), is renowned as a vehicle of sinification in premodern Asia. Its long history in popular storytelling in China began in the ninth century, it was printed at least by the early fourteenth century, and the first coherent version by Luo Guanzhong appeared in the mid-fourteenth century. It became one of four “masterworks” in Ming times, very possibly the progenitor of the sixteenth-century Chinese literati novel, and the story cycle culminated in the refinements and reorderings of Mao Zonggang in the late seventeenth century.² Considerable attention has also been paid to what constituted the “real” history of the three kingdoms, which

¹ Apart from the Cushman Memorial Lecture in Bangkok, I presented this paper at seminars in Canberra and Singapore. I benefited enormously from the contributions of the seminar participants on those occasions. For their suggestions and shrewd observations on this topic I would also like to thank Benedict Anderson, Tessa Morris-Suzuki, Thongchai Winichakul, Varuni Otsatharom, Kasian Tejapira, Suwadee Thanaprasitphatana, Rafe de Crespigny, Julaporn Euaraksakul, Kevin Hewison, Sakkharin Niyomsilpa, Tony Diller, Mark Elvin, Malinee Dilokwanich, Sombat Chanthornwong, Hong Lysa, Tony Reid, John Clark, Russell Heng, Chalong Suntharawanich, and Maurizio Peleggi. Phirun Chatravanichakul and Cholthira Satyawadhana helped to steer me in the right direction at an early stage of my research.

² Andrew H. Plaks, *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), chap. 5. See also Y.W. Ma, “The Chinese Historical Novel: An Outline of Themes and Contexts”, *JAS*, 34:2 (Feb. 1975), pp. 277–94.

historical materials can document, as opposed to the deviation from the true past in the romance.³ And there is now a growing literature on *Sanguo*'s migration through the Chinese diaspora of East and Southeast Asia.⁴ Today in China and in those countries of the region historically responsive to sinic civilization, the romance continues to be rewritten and "applied" to the problems of daily life. More grandly, it could be said that *Sanguo* in its manifold versions upholds an ethic of business and politics and articulates a culture of strategy for public life.

In Siam the work was translated at the end of the eighteenth century, the beginning of the so-called Bangkok period, at the behest of the first monarch of the Jakkri dynasty. *Sanguo* is known in Thai by its transcribed title, *Sam Kok*; by 1905 it was part of the secondary school curriculum where it became known to generations of readers. In 1914 during the sixth Jakkri reign King Vajiravudh (r. 1910–25), who was no mean literary talent himself, established the Literary Society and directed it to identify exemplary works in each of seven genres. *Sam Kok* was named exemplar in the category of "collected tales".⁵ Within a hundred years of its translation *Sam Kok* had, for all intents and purposes, been thoroughly indigenized and was now regarded as Thai literature. But the "translation"—as we shall see, the term must be called into question—as smooth and elegant as it is, retains a great deal of Chinese nomenclature, particularly proper names and toponyms, much to the annoyance of Thai readers who have trouble keeping the placenames and minor characters straight. The main characters have more than one name, which also complicates things. Some readers find the content violent in places, though given the photographs splashed across the pages of magazines and the daily press, violence in *Sam Kok* cannot be a serious deterrent to reading it.

From the second decade of this century the text has undergone innumerable rewritings, retranslations, and explications, to say nothing of applications in the form of self-help books, called "how to" (*haw thu*) books in Thai. Among the rewritings and reinterpretations there is a so-called "beggar's version" and, in proper dialectical fashion, a "capitalist"

³ Rafe de Crespigny, *Generals of the South: The Foundation and Early History of the Three Kingdoms State of Wu* (Canberra: Faculty of Asian Studies, Australian National University, 1990) is now the most substantial and authoritative study of this kind.

⁴ Claudine Salmon, ed., *Literary Migrations: Traditional Chinese Fiction in Asia (17–20th Centuries)* (Beijing: International Culture Publishing Corporation, 1987). On the penetration of *Sanguo* into the Malay world see the same author's "The Three Kingdoms in the Malay World—Religion and Literature", *Asian Culture* 16 (June 1992), pp. 14–34.

⁵ Wibha Senanan, *The Genesis of the Novel in Thailand* (Bangkok: Thai Watana Panich Co., Ltd., 1975), p. 21. King Chulalongkorn, *Phraratchaphithi sip song duan* (Royal Ceremonies of the Twelve Months) (Bangkok: Khurusapha Press, 1963), pp. *kho-ngo*. On the Literary Society generally see Walter F. Vella, *Chaiyo! King Vajiravudh and the Development of Thai Nationalism* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1978), p. 239.

version, a “coffee shop” version, a “disco” version, various military versions, and numerous cartoon versions. The “intimate” version, surprisingly not a big seller, dropped from sight after it was first published nearly thirty years ago.⁶ In 1989 the Foundation for the Blind in Thailand produced a puppet show of *Sam Kok*, the script for which bore little relation to the eighteenth-century Thai version and featured a puppet portraying a recent Thai beauty contest winner who grew up in southern California.⁷ My own recommendation, a lucidly written pocket-book for the reader who is short of time and stamina and who is willing to forgo the literariness of the First Reign edition and settle for the plot, is *The Cream of Sam Kok*.⁸

An exceedingly flexible, malleable text, *Sam Kok* provides an excuse to discuss just about anything. “Dr Phat”, for example, dispenses advice on health care. The pseudonymous author of “the medical version” of *Sam Kok* who used to write for *Air Force News*, Dr. Phat leaps from a seemingly innocent discussion of poison-tipped arrows for the crossbow—the weapon of choice in the ancient China of *Sam Kok*—to a chilling itemization of the toxins, pesticides, pollutants, food additives, and contaminants used as substitutes for more expensive ingredients (for example, borax in fish balls) that Bangkok residents now find in their diet.⁹ His tactics seem aimed at maintaining a high level of anxiety in his readers and, given the environmental horrors of life in the capital city, thus guarantee him a loyal readership. In other essays the author suggests that the character Jo Cho (Cao Cao) has all the symptoms of syphilis, a diagnosis that gives Dr Phat an opportunity to describe the primary, secondary, and tertiary stages of the disease. He then goes on to demonstrate that Jo Cho was a certifiable paranoid.

By one count in 1985 there were some thirty versions of *Sam Kok*, though surely this number would now be much exceeded.¹⁰ By the late

⁶ Nan Kong Phoe, *The Intimate Version of Sam Kok: The Love Life of Jo Cho* trans. Sutthiphon Nitiwatthana (Bangkok: Phraephiththaya, 1965). In China during the late 1950s there was renewed interest in the career and historical significance of Jo Cho (pinyin Cao Cao); see Rafe de Crespigny, “The Three Kingdoms and Western Jin: A History of China in the 3rd Century A.D.–I”, *East Asian History* 1 (1991), p. 9, n. 24.

⁷ Ronald D. Renard, “*Sam Kok*: Thai Versions of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*” (unpublished paper, Payap University, Chiangmai, January 1991), pp. 16–18.

⁸ Thamnu Nawayuk, comp., *Sam kok chabap hua kathi* (The Cream of Sam Kok) (Third printing, Bangkok: Nanmi, 1991). In the December 1990–January 1991 period this book was ranked as the ninth best-seller in the fiction category; see *Thurakit nangsu* (Book Business), 2: 1 (Jan.–Feb. 1991).

⁹ “Mo Phat,” *Sam kok chabap nai phaet* (Sam Kok: Physician’s Edition) (Bangkok: Bai Bua Press, 1989).

¹⁰ Sunan Phuangphum, “Kan suksa san khong phu praphan sam kok chabap tang tang nai phasa thai (A Study of Authorial Messages in Thai Versions of *Sam Kok*)” (MA thesis, Silpakorn University, 1985), pp. 23–29.

1980s and early 1990s the retranslations, rewritings and applications of *Sam Kok* had become a growth industry.¹¹ In mid-1992 on a research trip to Bangkok I found that all the major weekly news magazines ran columns on *Sam Kok*, making use of the romance to advise business people on how to become even more successful and rich. Columnists also took great pleasure in tweaking the nose of the former prime minister, General Suchinda Kraprayoon, who had resigned in disgrace after the May 1992 massacre at Democracy Monument, by parodying the career of Sima Yi, one of the central *Sam Kok* characters.¹²

The current popularity of the romance has to do, on the one hand, with its putative wisdom about human nature. It is seen to be a comprehensive inventory of human virtues and foibles. As Atsiri Thammachot, a columnist writing for *Sayam Rat* weekly who draws on *Sam Kok*, has put it, "All these people [the *Sam Kok* characters] are rather like respected elder relatives of us Thai—some of them quite decent and others not so good".¹³ The *Sam Kok* characters portray trustworthiness, loyalty, and grace under pressure, but they are also capable of blind ambition, abject weakness, and betrayal. On the other hand, *Sam Kok*'s putative wisdom about war strategy, battle tactics, and strategic deception is useful in politics, diplomacy, and business. The arts of war can be indispensable in outwitting and defeating your adversary without greatly diminishing your resources. In the present social formation, *Sam Kok* can prove invaluable in getting the better of your competitor in the cut and thrust of the business world.

While there has been some academic attention to the place of *Sam Kok* in Thai literary history and to the evolution of the story cycle in popular culture, the sheer quantity of rewritings begs many questions about how the romance crept into the consciousness of modern Thai readers. To my knowledge no academic treatment of *Sam Kok* takes seriously enough what the popular literature on *Sam Kok* that floods the newstands and book stalls might signify about the present Thai epoch. In this essay I propose to survey the rewritings of *Sam Kok* and relate them to specific moments in the history of Thai social formations. In doing so, I take *Sam Kok* to be not an imported cultural artifact so much as an instance of

¹¹ According to *Thurakit nangsu* (see note 8), *Sinlapa kanchai khon nai sam kok* (The Art of Managing People in *Sam Kok*), by Bunsak Saengrawi (Bangkok: Ko Kai, 1990), topped the best-seller list in non-fiction in the period Dec. 1990–Jan. 1991. Another title on *Sam Kok* was ranked tenth. Examination of best seller lists of other periods would, I think, confirm the recent commercial success of *Sam Kok*.

¹² See the columns in *Sayam rat sapda wijan* by "Jin Sao Lin" (Thongthaem Natchamnong) and Atsiri Thammachot that began before General Suchinda became prime minister following the March 1992 elections and continued after his resignation in late May. Note that the first syllables in the name of the *Sam Kok* character and of the general (*su*) are homophonous in Thai; this was one of the codes that made the parody work for Thai readers.

¹³ *Sayam rat sapda wijan*, 9–15 Feb. 1992.

the reproduction of Chinese culture within Thailand.¹⁴ A certain “Chineseness”, as it were, has been preserved, for this “Chineseness”, although it has ceased to be sinifying in the premodern sense of the term, continues to validate the romance’s utility. As the Thai economy has been swept along by the growth economies of the Little Dragons—Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea—as well as Japan and southern China, the sinifying process, if we may call it that, is now bound up with industrialization and capitalism. The marketing of *Sam Kok* as well as its willing reception in all its deformations by Thai readers is now firmly wedded to that enterprise.¹⁵

Let me now review the history of the relationship between *Sam Kok* and Thai social formations by means of five modalities—translation, dissemination, fragmentation, commodification, and mythification—which express and concretize that relationship. I present these five modalities as if they were in temporal sequence, but it will be clear that they are overlapping and synchronic at various points. The first modality, translation, for example, is as pertinent to the consumption of *Sam Kok* today as it was two hundred years ago.

Translation

The basic circumstances of the translation into Thai at the end of the eighteenth century have long been known, largely by means of the extensive preface by Prince Damrong to the printed edition of 1928.¹⁶ The first Bangkok king commissioned the translation of *Sanguo yanyi* from Chinese and appointed a high-ranking noble, Jaophraya Phrakhleng (Hon), to supervise the work. At the same time, Rama I also commissioned a

¹⁴ The emphasis here is slightly different from Toshiharu Yoshikawa’s notion of an imported or transplanted Chinese culture that stimulated the tastes of the Thai elite and merchant groups, fostering “a rich lifestyle of flourishing curiosity and commercialism sensitive to opportunities for individualist expression”; see his “The Development of Chinese Culture within the Urban Formation of Nineteenth-Century Bangkok”, in *The Formation of Urban Civilization in Southeast Asia 2*, ed. Yoshihiro Tsubouchi (Kyoto: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1991), pp. 52–73.

¹⁵ See, for example, Matsumoto Kasuo, *Konlayut kankha khong chaojin phon thale* (Commercial Strategies of the Overseas Chinese), trans. Thiralak Thawannaphong (Bangkok: Dokya, 1990), published originally in Japanese; and Foeng Moeng Long (1574–1646), *Phumbanya tawan ok lem nung khamphi kanchai khon* (Wisdom of the East: Book I, A Canonical Text on Utilizing People), trans. Adun Ratanamankasem (Bangkok: Dokya, 1991), first published in modern Chinese in 1989. The editor of the latter, Thongthaem Natchamnong, who has been instrumental in harnessing for Thai readers the hybrid literature on the Chinese arts of war and East Asian business success, tells us in his preface that Mao Tse-tung read this early modern Chinese work in 1963.

¹⁶ Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, “Tamnan nangsu sam kok”, pp. 8–62 in *Sam kok* (Bangkok: Amorn Kanphim, 1967).

translation of the Mon epic romance, *Rachathirat*, and put Hon in charge of that work as well. And the prince of the Rear Palace, a nephew of the king, was appointed to supervise the translation of *Sai-han*, a Chinese historical novel that was destined to have a less illustrious fate with the Thai reading public.¹⁷ Thai commentators have habitually put these historical romances in the category of "literature" rather than "history", and thus their study has tended to lie in the province of comparative literature or literary history rather than political history.¹⁸ The literary quality of the translation, to which modern Thai writers testify by admiring the prose, and the role of *Sam Kok* in the school curriculum have strongly influenced the way the work has been studied. For example, the careful scholarship by Malinee Dilokwanich on the Thai translation from Chinese concludes that the literary quality of *Sam Kok*, rather than its function in reifying or commenting ironically on Thai social formations, is responsible for its enduring popularity.¹⁹ As a consequence, semiotic, sociological, and psychological perspectives on *Sam Kok* over the two hundred years since its translation into Thai are notably missing.²⁰

Hon did not himself translate the romance, though he may have helped with the final polishing of the draft. The actual work of translation was accomplished by two teams: a Chinese team that produced a rough draft; and a Thai team that revised it and, in the process, filtered out much of the "Chineseness". Hon is credited with other literary achievements as well, and the high quality of the translation is generally attributed to his participation in the project, even if, as seems to be the case, he died before

¹⁷ *Phongsawadan jin sai han* (*Sai-han: A Chinese History*) (Bangkok: 1965). According to the introduction by Prince Damrong, this work was first printed in 1874 and reprinted in 1905 and 1963. See also Malinee Dilokwanich, "A Study of *Sam Kok*: The First Thai Translation of a Chinese Novel", *JSS*, 73: 1/2 (Jan. and July 1985), pp. 86-87.

¹⁸ There have been some notable exceptions. On the political significance of these works see, for example, the article by Sombat Chantornwong in *Wikhro sam kok* (*Analysing Samkok*), special issue of *Warasan esia tawanok suksa* (*Journal of East Asian Studies*), 2:2 (Dec. 1989) and the MA thesis by one of Sombat's former students comparing *Sam Kok* to Machiavelli's *The Prince*: Manit Sangiamphonphanit, "Phunam kap kanborihan nai wan-nakhadi ruang sam kok (*Leadership and Management in the Romance of the Three Kingdoms*)," (MA thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1979).

¹⁹ Malinee Dilokwanich, "Ekkalak thai nai sam kok: rupbaep kanpraphan" (*Thai Identity in Sam Kok: The Mode of its Composition*), *Warasan thammasat*, 13: 2 (June 1984), p. 132. The famous writer Kukrit Pramoj once said that he turned to *Sam Kok* to freshen up his prose style when it went flat.

²⁰ It will be apparent that my interpretive strategy here is not dissimilar to Benedict Anderson's in *Mythology and the Tolerance of the Javanese* (Ithaca, New York: Modern Indonesia Project, Cornell University, 1965), though the cultural products in question are very different. The Javanese *wayang*, the subject of Anderson's essay, is more visual in its dissemination than *Sam Kok*, and while the *wayang* is arguably a "core" Javanese cultural artefact, *Sam Kok* is not, or not yet, recognized as such.

completing it.²¹ The preceding king of Siam, Taksin, was from the Teochiu speech group as was most of the Bangkok Chinese population, but analysis of the transcription of proper names suggests that Hokkien (Fujian) speakers predominated in the Chinese team, an indication of the access the merchant mandarins of the South China coast then had to the Siamese court and to shaping its cultural productions.²²

Why was the translation commissioned? It has to be said that the first Jakkri king came to power by a *coup d'état*, and usurpation is an ever-present theme in both *Sam Kok* and *Sai-han*. Prince Damrong in his introduction to the 1928 printed edition declared that *Sanguo* was translated because it would be "useful in conducting the affairs of state" (*phua prayot ratchakan ban muang*). The standard history of Thailand in English understands this to mean that *Sam Kok* served "as a model for the public behavior of rulers, counselors, and soldiers".²³ As is often the case, the relationship between text and behaviour is problematic for historians. Leaving aside for a moment the thorny issues of dissemination and readership and the meaning of "public" at this time, can we say anything—and with what degree of confidence—about the kind of behaviour that was being modelled? What makes the work so dynamic and intrigues modern Thai readers is the entanglement of war and politics and the way human ingenuity can serve as the warrior's chief weapon. The characters in *Sam Kok* personalize this entanglement.

The second half of the eighteenth and well into the early nineteenth century was a time of war for the Siamese state, and *Sam Kok* provided reassurance that a warrior who was also a skilled politician had the prowess to achieve the reunification. Taksin had proved himself just as capable of that task as the nobleman who became the first Jakkri king. The proposition that *Sam Kok* provided such reassurance would be true only if *Sanguo* already had the reputation of recommending proper elite behaviour to rulers, counsellors, and soldiers through the force of parable; this in turn would be true for the first reign only if sufficient numbers of Sino-Thai—or merchant mandarins working in, and with, the court—had already imbibed the historical romance.

Yet *Sam Kok* has been popular with Thai readers not because it lays down canons of ideal conduct. Rather, it tells of the limits of human possibility. The romance is generally "realistic" in its politics in a way

²¹ Not all commentators agree on whether or not the translation was finished when Hon died in 1805; see Malinee Dilokwanich, "Samkok: A Study of A Thai Adaptation of a Chinese Novel" (PhD dissertation, University of Washington, 1983), p. 44.

²² Malinee, "Thai Adaptation", 46–47, agrees with the conclusions of Sang Phattanothai on the predominance of Hokkien speakers in the Chinese translation team.

²³ David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 155. Dr Malinee, "First Thai Translation", p. 89, thinks it is entirely possible that the *Sanguo* text had been consulted in King Taksin's time as a guide to warfare.

that Thai official, Marxist, and social science discourses are not. Someone's gain means someone else's loss, and even the victorious are ultimately defeated in other times and circumstances. There are as many failures in its pages as there are successes. The clever general with his bag of tricks, for example, inevitably makes a dupe of the adversary he outwits. Human experience in this novel, it could be said, is close to the dialectics of everyday life. *Sam Kok's* guidance for public men is of a different order than, say, the guidance, if it be such, offered by the ideals of Indic kingship. I shall return later to a more refined definition of political prowess, with its specifically masculine and military overtones in the Thai context, that might be gleaned from *Sam Kok*.

As his title designates, Jaophraya Phrakhleng (Hon) held the position of *phrakhleng*, head of the royal treasury. In the nature of his duties he was also in charge of the Bangkok port, royal junk trade with the south China coast, and Chinese migrants. There is no evidence that Hon himself was Chinese, but, given the importance of Chinese trade and commercial savvy in the Jakkri success story, links with the Chinese merchants either by blood or marriage deserve further investigation. Even more to the point in explaining why *Sanguo* was translated, the merchant mandarins with whom Hon worked as the court's chief trade official knew the romance as part of their native literary culture and they, as well as Jaophraya Jakkri's much publicized military prowess, had a lot to do with making Jakkri the first Bangkok king, just as they had a lot to do with making Taksin king. A Sino-Thai hybrid term for these merchant mandarins was *jao sua*; Sarasin Viraphol in his study of the junk trade glosses the Chinese term as indicating wealth and philanthropy.²⁴ From the late nineteenth century the term came to be synonymous with (Chinese) rice millers along the Chaophraya River. These *jao sua* were the historical antecedents of the Sino-Thai tycoons and entrepreneurs so prominent in present-day Thai finance and commerce. These were the circumstances that led the *nouveau* Jakkri court to incorporate the oral literary tradition spread throughout the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia as part of its own cultural heritage.

More than one hundred years after its establishment as the new capital, Bangkok had the unmistakable stamp of a Chinese city, but despite the abundant evidence of the Chinese element in the making of early Bangkok, historiography has been slow to digest the fact and ruminate about its significance, particularly for cultural production.²⁵ With notable excep-

²⁴ Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit: Sino-Siamese Trade, 1652-1853* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1977), p. 161. The Chinese term is *zuo-shan* (座山), or *je sua* in Teochiu which Thai phonology transformed into *jao sua*, Thai *jao* meaning "lord", "someone of royal lineage", "deity", "owner", "master".

²⁵ See the telling details of Bangkok's Chineseness in G. William Skinner, *Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1957), p. 88.

tions, Western historians have internalized the repression of Chineseness instigated by the racist policies of the Thai state between 1910 and 1945 and have interpreted the early Bangkok period accordingly; Thai and, more recently, Japanese, historians have confronted the phenomenon more directly.²⁶

For the first seventy years or so of the Bangkok period the geopolitical framework for state-to-state relations between Siam and China continued to be the tribute system. Chinese investiture was essential to the first four Bangkok kings, the last tribute mission being sent as late as 1853; the period 1781–1844 saw the highest level ever for tribute missions, nearly one per year. The junk trade in the eighteenth century increased Chinese immigration to the port, making the Jakkri capital largely Chinese from its inception. According to Skinner's calculations, it is highly probable that Rama I was half Chinese.²⁷ Many of the merchant mandarins who held appointments at court and conducted trade with Siam continued to maintain residence and a Chinese wife in China and to wear the queue in Siam. Their numbers and their prominence account for the Chinese customs observed at the Bangkok court.²⁸ Chinese language was taught in at least one of the princely households as late as the Fourth Reign (1851–68).²⁹ The Chinese motifs in the architecture of Bangkok monasteries have long been documented. At Wat Yannawa, one of many Bangkok *wat* with such motifs, there is a stucco replica of a Chinese junk with a stupa on top.³⁰ And in Wat Bowonniwet, a royal monastery where Prince Mongkut was abbot until he became king in 1851, a Chinese-style pavilion, Wihan Keng, contains murals depicting the famous sea battle in which Khong Beng (Zhuge Liang, Zhuge Kongming) sets fire to Jo Cho's

²⁶ The landmark study on the relationship between the trade with China and cultural production in Siam is Nidhi Aeusrivongse, *Pak kai lae bai rua* (Quill and Sail) (Bangkok: Amarin, 1984), chap. 1 (Bourgeois Culture and Artistic Production in the Early Bangkok Period). An earlier, pioneering study was Manlika Ruangraphi, "Botbat khong chao jin nai dan setthakit sangkhom lae silpakam thai samai ratchakan thi 1 thung thi 4 haeng krung rattanakosin (The Economic, Social, and Artistic Role of the Chinese from the First to the Fourth Reigns of the Bangkok Period)" (MA thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1975). Yoshikawa, *Urban Civilization*, who comments on the implications of Nidhi's argument that the Chinese elite regarded Chinese historical novels as vulgar (p. 59), is the most extensive discussion in English.

²⁷ Skinner, *Chinese Society*, p. 26.

²⁸ Malinee, "Thai Adaptation", pp. 12–13. The queue, or pigtail, as an index of Chineseness is problematic, however. "Chineseness" as an ethnic category was a much later construction of the racist and absolutist policies of the sixth Jakkri king (r. 1910–25). See the deconstruction of Skinner's assimilation paradigm in Kasian Tejapira, "Pigtail: A Pre-History of Chineseness in Siam" *Sojourn* 7:1 (Feb. 1992), pp. 95–122.

²⁹ Kukrit Pramoj, *Khrongkraduk nai tu* (Skeletons in the Closet) (Bangkok: n.p., 1971), p. 32.

³⁰ Yoshikawa, *Urban Civilization* p. 63.

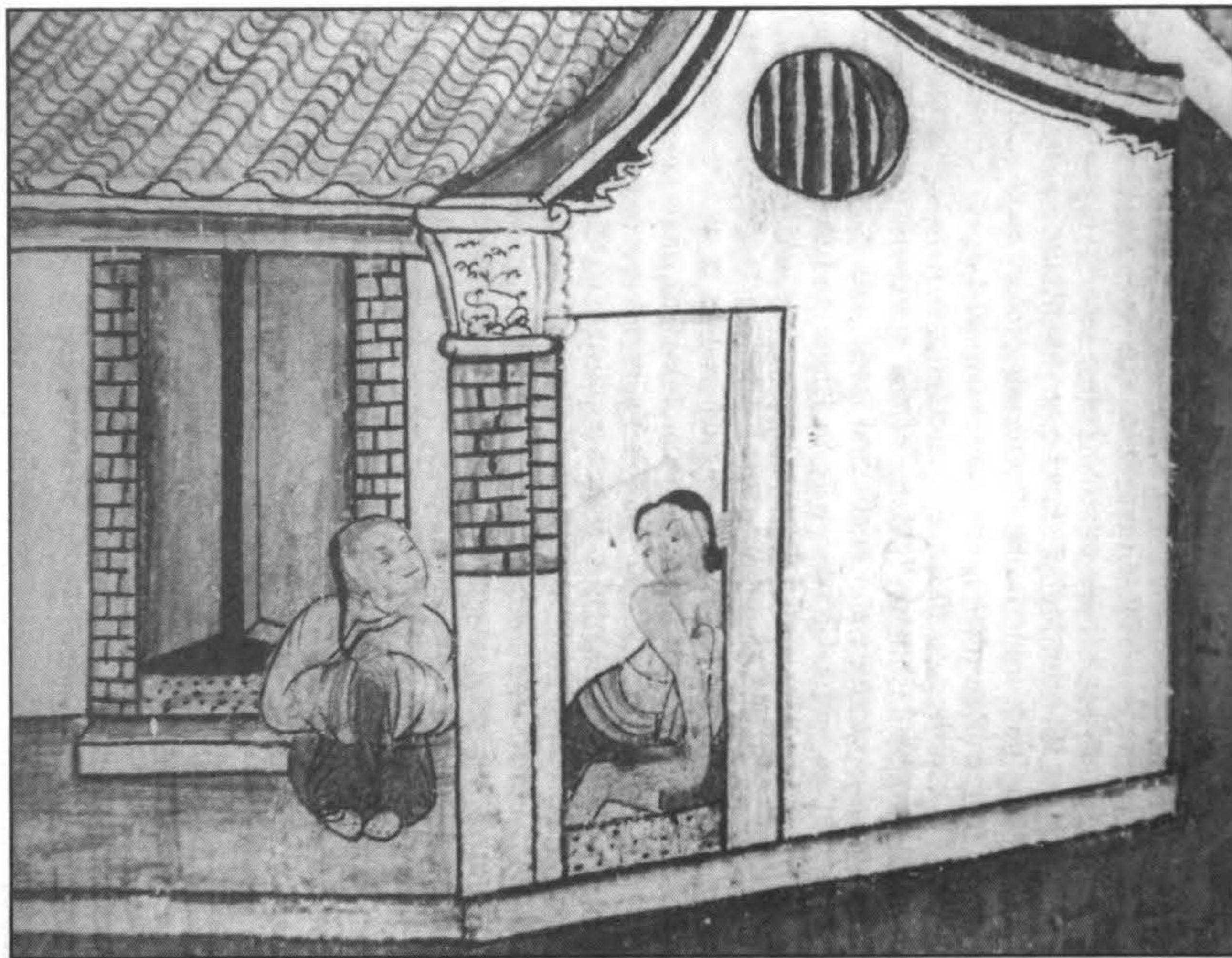


Figure 4. Chinese man and Thai woman, from a nineteenth century temple mural in Songkhla. *Wat Matchimawat* (Bangkok: Muang Boran Publishing House, 1983)

navy and destroys it.³¹ Rattling the skeletons in his family closet, M.R. Kukrit Pramoj, the renowned author and statesman who traces his descent from a Chinese immigrant of the late eighteenth century, relates the Chineseness of the first four Bangkok reigns with great pride and affection.³² In so doing, he underscores the pervasiveness of Chinese culture in the early Bangkok court. Perhaps "Sino-Thai" should be allowed to have a more bicultural connotation for this period, rather than the meaning of "becoming Thai" that sociologists and anthropologists have given it in praising Thai society's capacity to assimilate the Chinese.

There are at least two faces of the early Bangkok kings (r. 1782–1851): one as model Buddhist monarchs who had proper Brahmanical coronations and who displayed their royalty according to the canons of Indic kingship; and the other as merchant kings, basically Sino-Thai businessmen who happened to be rulers.³³ Their antecedents as merchant kings dated from at least the early sixteenth century.³⁴

Without wanting to label one kingly face "Chinese" and the other "Indic" and thus to categorize too crudely, one could, however, note that the fate of the respective cultural products emanating from this Janus-like creature has been quite different. *Sam Kok* is far more a living, breathing thing than the *Ramakien*, Rama I's Thai adaptation of the Indian epic, the *Ramayana*. More consistently in Bangkok history than the *Ramakien*, *Sam Kok* has inspired writers, entertained and taught the public, and made money for publishers. Probably over half the text of *Sam Kok* is plain-speaking dialogue, in contrast to the *Ramakien* where the dialogue is stylized and unnatural. Yet, while any inventory of Thai national culture would be sure to include the *Ramakien*, the infinitely more popular and more marketable *Sam Kok* would fail to make the list, however honoured by King Vajiravudh's Literary Society. The latter is simply not sufficiently

³¹ Reproductions of the murals, discussed in Renard, "Sam Kok: Thai Versions" are soon to be published by the Walter F. Vella Scholarship Fund.

³² Kukrit, *Khrongkraduk*, *passim*.

³³ This latter point was established more than ten years ago by Nidhi Aeusrivongse (*Quill and Sail*; the chapter in question was first published in 1982), and I take it to be conventional wisdom. On the two faces of early Bangkok kingship compare, for example, the impression Skinner gives of the late eighteenth century as marked in all sorts of ways by Chineseness to the one given in Lorraine Gesick's extensive discussion of Taksin's reign ("Kingship and Political Integration in Traditional Siam, 1767–1824", PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 1976). Her chapter 3, "Taksin and the Thonburi Kingdom", ends with an evaluation of the ideals of Indic kingship, which the monarch claimed to have attained, and hardly mentions Taksin's lineage and what it might have meant for his reign. Chapter 4 on Rama I also stresses the Indic nature of kingship at the expense of the Chinese factor in dynastic restoration.

³⁴ Dhiravat na Pombejra, "Crown Trade and Court Politics in Ayutthaya" in *The South-east Asian Port and Polity: Rise and Demise*, edited by J. Kathirithamby-Wells and John Villiers (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1990), p. 130.

"Thai" according to the state's culture managers, although the criteria for "Thai-ness" is becoming more flexible because of the commodification of culture I will discuss later.³⁵ It is time to rethink the assessment of the Indic in Thai history that leads historians to say that "Hindu military tradition had a great influence on Siam" without mentioning Chinese political and military strategy in the same context.³⁶

Statistical sampling suggests that *Sam Kok* is not so much a translation as a creation in Thai language. Basing her calculations on a limited sample of the work, Dr Malinee concludes that fully 60 per cent of *Sam Kok* shows no equivalence with the Chinese original, and only 40 per cent can be considered even as approximate translation. Five per cent of the Chinese text, including the poetry, has been omitted from the Thai version.³⁷ The eighteenth-century translators—almost certainly the Thai team played a decisive role in this part of the process—reconceptualized the Chinese world view as a Thai world view. Chinese "heaven", for example, underwent a sea change and became something more Theravada Buddhist than Taoist.³⁸ One contemporary author talks about the Thai Buddhist values in the romance (e.g. gratitude and obligations for favours bestowed; devotion and loyalty; trustworthiness) that made it easy for Thai readers to understand, but these values are not Chinese values. They are examples of how *Sam Kok* had been Thai-ized in the "summary translation" process.³⁹

The lapses, omissions, and silences in the transformation of *Sanguo* into *Sam Kok* have left modern translators, who have access to complete or, in some cases, newly discovered, Chinese source texts, with plenty to do in "restoring" *Sanguo* for Thai readers. And the titles the translators give

³⁵ For discussion of the historical formation of Thai-ness, see my introduction to *National Identity and its Defenders: Thailand, 1939–1989*, ed. Craig J. Reynolds (Clayton, Victoria: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1991), pp. 1–40.

³⁶ See, for instance, Sukunya Bumroongsook, "Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy: The Modernization of Military Education in Thailand (1887–1948)" (PhD dissertation, Northern Illinois University, 1991), p. 26. An author who proposes that the Chinese are more fraternally related to the Thai than other ethnic groups such as Indians (*khaek*) and appeals for reassessment of the Chinese factor in Thai life is Thammakiat Kanari, "Wannakam jin nai wannakam thai" (Chinese Literature in Thai Letters), *Sinlapa watthanatham* 7:4 (Feb. 1986), pp. 18–26.

³⁷ Malinee, "Thai Adaptation", p. 123. In chap. 3 and in her 1985 article "First Thai Translation", Dr Malinee explains that the translators omitted the poetry in order to facilitate *Sam Kok*'s acceptance as a work in prose. Nidhi, *Pak Kai*, p. 190 emphasizes that the translation was done in prose in order to facilitate reading or reading aloud.

³⁸ Malinee, "Thai Adaptation", chap. 7. A modified version of this chapter has been published: Malinee Dilokwanich, "Significance of Buddhist Thought in *Samkok*", *Warasan thammawat*, 12: 4 (Dec. 1983), pp. 46–66.

³⁹ Runruthai Satchaphan, *Itthiphon wannakam tang prathet nai wannakam thai* (Influences of Foreign Literary Works on Thai Literature), rev. ed. (Bangkok: Faculty of Humanities, Ramkhamhaeng University, 1982), p. 132.

to their renditions of *Sam Kok* play on the opportunity to produce the “authentic”, “real”, or “true” version. The exemplary text commissioned by Rama I and produced under the close supervision of one of his most trusted officials has become in the two hundred years since its first production an object to unravel, excerpt, explicate, fragment, parody, and pirate in the interests of satisfying the diverse demands of book consumers. It remains essential, nevertheless, to authenticate *Sam Kok* as a work translated from Chinese. As Thai as it might appear in the hands of an expert translator, its Chineseness remains, and must remain in order to validate its putative wisdom, which is sited in a fabulized ancient China.

Dissemination

Before printing technology arrived in Siam in the 1830s *Sam Kok* manuscripts had only limited distribution. Even so, what is interesting about the romance is that it is a prose narrative, as was the Mon historical romance *Rachathirat* and the Chinese romance *Sai-han*, in an age when verse was still the preferred form of literary expression. Even in manuscript form the historical romances were more likely to be read or, perhaps more to the point, read aloud by the nobility and royal family than the chronicle history that the court was assiduously assembling. These Thai prose narratives had a lot to do with shaping the historical consciousness of the elite in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They were at once political intelligence about the Chinese, Mons, and Burmese, a way of learning about these non-Thai peoples, and ethnographies for understanding these significant “Others” whom the Thonburi–Bangkok courts sought to rule. As such, the historical romances were close in the way they functioned to the knowledge manuals (*tamra*) that were a feature of premodern Thai education.

Was the readership predominantly Sino-Thai? We do not know. Chinese immigrants might well have had copies of *Sanguo* in their possession for educating their children or simply for enjoyment.⁴⁰ Elsewhere in Southeast Asia it was common for Overseas Chinese, particularly women, to read *Sanguo* aloud and thus circulate the story cycle.⁴¹ In Siam the manuscript copy used to print the romance in 1928 turned up in the possessions of Princess Worasetsuda (1828–1907), known for her scholarly and teacherly talents in the royal courts of the nineteenth century,

⁴⁰ Malinee, “First Thai Translation”, p. 87.

⁴¹ Among Overseas Chinese communities elsewhere in Southeast Asia—in Makassar, for example—*Sanguo* was read aloud to children; see Salmon, *Literary Migrations*, p. 572. I agree with Salmon’s comment (“Three Kingdoms”, p. 19) that historiography is at present ignorant about how Chinese fiction circulated in the Southeast Asian diaspora. Her own work in overcoming this ignorance is exemplary.

suggesting that the work was canonical in the education of the aristocracy.⁴² The general point to make about the dissemination of *Sam Kok* is that, just as its Chinese-language forebear was a sinifying instrument in the East Asian states within the orbit of China, so the romance in Thai language was Thai-ifying. In other words, it helped Thai-speaking Chinese immigrants and their descendants to position their Chineseness, to find a place for it in relation to their adoptive home.

In 1865 *Sam Kok* was printed for the first time at a press owned by Dr D.B. Bradley, the American missionary who was one of the most important nineteenth-century culture brokers of Western technology to the Siamese elite.⁴³ The reproduction of historical romance in print—and the valorization of ancient Chinese political and military strategy that the printing of *Sam Kok* carried—held a certain irony, however, for the court's ritual dependence on China had ended with the last tribute mission in 1853. The memory that Chinese statecraft was relevant to Siamese rulers was preserved for the last time in the royal annals when the Bunnag nobleman, Jaophraya Thiphakorawong, is said to have advised the boy-king Chulalongkorn at his coronation in 1868 to heed the example of the three ancient Chinese sage-kings, Yao, Shun, and Yu. But was the memory of relevant, if somewhat fabulized, Chinese political experience doomed to disappear altogether with the passing of formal tributary relations? To satisfy the market created by the new print technology, a host of Chinese histories, historical romances, and biographies were translated into Thai and published at this time.⁴⁴

What is the significance of the massive influx of Chinese histories and novels in translation, especially between the Fourth and Sixth Reigns (1851 and 1925)?⁴⁵ The consumers of these translations were willing to read prose, and given the volume, there must have been a sizeable market that could do so. The prospective readers of these translations were residents of the capital who had been Chinese, so to speak—they would have spoken

⁴² Malinee, "Thai Adaptation", pp. 48–9; on this aristocratic woman see *Autobiography: The Life of Prince-Patriarch Vajiranana of Siam, 1860–1921*, ed. and trans. Craig J. Reynolds (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1979), pp. 11–12, 79.

⁴³ Malinee, "Thai Adaptation", p. 49. On Bradley see Donald C. Lord, *Mo Bradley and Thailand* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1969).

⁴⁴ The list of translations has been published many times; see, for example, Runruthai, *Itthiphon*, pp. 121–3, who takes the titles largely from Damrong's introduction to the 1928 edition of *Sam Kok*, "*Tamnan nangsua sam kok*."

⁴⁵ Although the studies of Malinee, Sunan and others have somewhat addressed the neglect, the clarion call more than fifteen years ago by Khwandi Rakphong for scholars to take seriously the development of Chinese literature in Thai language, in all periods, in all its manifestations, has gone largely unheeded; see her comprehensive survey, Khwandi Rakphong, "*Wiwatthanakan khong wannakam jin baep jin lae kiaw kap jin nai phasa thai* (The Development in Thai Language of Chinese Literature, Writing Modelled on Chinese Forms, and Writing about China)," *Warasan thammasat* 7: 2 (Oct.–Dec., 1977), pp. 102–34.

a Chinese dialect as a mother tongue—but who now used Thai more or less fluently. The Sino-Thai elite had “aged”. Many Chinese families had been in the kingdom for two or three generations, and by the 1860s some had now worked their way up and into the capital’s elite. Another implication in the flood of translations at this time is that there were bilinguals capable of translating these works. The patrons or sponsors of the translations were now the high-ranking nobility, such as the Bunnag family, who had close ties with the Chinese migrant population as overlords.⁴⁶

But circulation of the *Sam Kok* historical romance in manuscript and, later, printed form is only part of the story of its dissemination. Is it likely that the translation commissioned by Rama I broke unannounced upon the literate elite? An oral tradition pre-existed the scripted version in China, where the *Sanguo* story cycle had circulated among storytellers and their audiences long before its consolidation in print. Indeed, the long history of *Sanguo*’s rewriting in East and Southeast Asian societies suggests that its orality, its retelling in speech, has been an active force in stimulating new versions. This feedback mechanism, what Walter Ong and others have called secondary orality, has acted to generate consumer interest in any allegedly new version that comes along. So, too, in Siam. Even today people who know *Sam Kok*, particularly Chinese migrants in the first and second generations, love to tell the stories or talk about their favourite characters with their relatives and acquaintances.⁴⁷ This secondary orality creates a knowledgeable audience that, insofar as it is a readership, helps to maintain demand for novel or off-beat printed versions.

This brings me to the question of how tales from *Sam Kok* circulated in the non-literate population. At this point the Thai evidence is very thin, there is little research in this field, and I can only outline some of the possibilities. For those unable to read either Thai or Chinese, literate storytellers, who could write letters and perform other scribal functions as well, would read aloud favourite episodes from *Sam Kok* in exchange for a few coins.⁴⁸ Chinese opera (*ngiw*), which European sources say was performed at least as far back as the seventeenth century in Ayuthaya, almost certainly played a role in disseminating *Sam Kok*. In modern times

⁴⁶ Khwandi, “Chinese Literature”, pp. 103–4.

⁴⁷ There is much anecdotal evidence to testify to this phenomenon. Phirun Chatravanichakul, for example, tells of accompanying his father, a Teochiu born in China, in the late 1950s to the Phra Meru ground near the Grand Palace in Bangkok. There at the stalls of astrologers and sellers of Buddhist amulets people would gather to talk, among other things of the virtues and foibles of the various *Sam Kok* characters. Personal communication, 5 Feb. 1991.

⁴⁸ This interesting ethnographic information comes from the preface of Yakhop’s rewriting of *Sam Kok*, “The Mendicant Storyteller’s Version,” the first volume of which appeared in 1943; see note 58 below. Yakhop gives no dates and no sources for the practice of streetside storytelling.



Figure 5. Detail of a late nineteenth century temple mural in Songkhla, depicting a puppet performance. This detail shows a Chinese man selling tea and sweets. *Wat Matchimawat* (Bangkok: Muang Boran Publishing House, 1983)

some of the scripts for *ngiw* were based on *Sam Kok*. But unlike *Sam Kok*, which, to some extent, is seen to be lodged in Thai literary culture and thus worthy of academic attention to its incessant reproduction, *ngiw* is considered more as an alien form of popular culture, not Thai enough to be a Thai theatrical art form. So the idea that *ngiw* and *Sam Kok* are closely related has yet to be fully explored.

Yet *ngiw* was popular with Chinese working class migrants, who made up the largest proportion of the Chinese migrant population in Siam. For 1830 Skinner gives a figure of 100,000 China-born Chinese in Siam as a whole, most of them in the capital, a substantial audience for *ngiw* performances.⁴⁹ How many working class patrons of the brothels, gambling halls, and opium dens, which the government ran as tax farms to collect revenue, also partook of Chinese opera on their way to or from these other recreations or at festivals and *wat* fairs? *Ngiw* was performed during a procession that brought the so-called Emerald Buddha image from Vientiane in Taksin's time during the late eighteenth century, and 112 small stone figures of *ngiw* characters are prominent in Taksin's palace.⁵⁰ The Front Palace court from the 1840s through the 1880s sponsored *ngiw* troupes. Towards the end of this period the Front Palace prince, Wichaichan, introduced Chinese puppets; at least some of the scripts for the puppet performances came from the *Sam Kok* story cycle.⁵¹ *Ngiw* troupes, brought from Guangzhou to Thailand as late as the middle of this century, indicate how Chinese migrants to Thailand had their Chineseness reinforced by exposure to this ancient dramatic form.⁵²

Ngiw has played a disseminating role in modern Thai political culture more recently in the form of *ngiw kanmuang* or "political Chinese opera",

⁴⁹ Skinner, *Chinese Society*, pp. 70–71. In reviewing the population estimates by nineteenth-century European visitors, Skinner points out that the overestimates are explained by the fact that the Europeans spent most of their time in the capital, which was more Chinese than anywhere else in the country.

⁵⁰ Bunthoet Aratan, ed., *Khon jin 200 pi phai tai phra borommapho somphan senthang setthakit chabap phiset* (200 Years of the Chinese under the Buddha's Protection, Economic Outlook, Special Issue) (Bangkok: Senthang Setthakit, 1983), p. 169; on the stone figures see pp. 230–37. The author of the article, Chanai Wannali, who gives no source, also links Chinese opera to *Sam Kok* by saying that the first Jakkri king sponsored *ngiw* performances during the translation of the work from Chinese.

⁵¹ Sathian Duangchanthop, "Hun chin 100 pi nai phiphitthaphan krom sinlapakon" (Chinese Puppets: 100 Years in the Museum of the Fine Arts Department), *Sinlapa watthanatham*, 13: 4 (Feb. 1991), pp. 40–46.

⁵² According to one author, the Chineseness of Bangkok—for example, the need to speak a Chinese language in many markets in the capital—did not really change until the Sarit period of the late 1950s. As late as the 1950s middle-aged Chinese women acted as marriage agents for Chinese men seeking Chinese spouses in the Bangrak market area along the Chao-phraya River; see Krit Sombatsiri, *Jek sakdina* (Feudalized Chinese), (Bangkok: Kaeo Prakai, 1986), chap. 4.

a parody of politicians that was immensely popular with university students, particularly at Thammasat University from the late 1960s through the mid-1970s and intermittently since then. Various military and civilian leaders were caricatured as *Sam Kok* characters and mocked in the press and at the annual Thammasat–Chulalongkorn soccer match when the usual taboos against criticism of the military regimes were ritually relaxed.⁵³ The satire was harsh and totally devastating in its mockery of the politicians. Were the organizers, performers, and writers of these parodies somehow protected by the sinicized medium of dissemination during a time of repressive censorship? Did the sinicized medium make the satire more unreal and has the alien character of *ngiw* thus been exploited to advantage? The exact function of the alien “Other” of Chineseness in political *ngiw* needs to be unravelled and distinguished from the sheer fun of the spectacle.

Another moment in the transmogrification of *Sam Kok* for Thai speakers occurred towards the end of the nineteenth century when *Sam Kok* stories were rewritten as *lakhon nok*, a dramatic form popular outside the court.⁵⁴ The plays were fast-paced and filled with humour, quarrelling, insults, and vulgarity. One of the noblemen close to King Chulalongkorn, Jaophraya Mahintharasakthamrong, owned a *lakhon nok* troupe and commissioned dramatic scripts for it to perform, many of them composed from Thai classical literary works.⁵⁵ The particular form of *lakhon nok* favoured by Mahin, called *phanthang*, portrayed various nationalities; the actors wore costumes to identify them as Mon, Lao, Burmese, or Chinese.

By the early twentieth century the volume of newspapers and magazines published in the capital brought about a frantic search for copy that would be popular and easy to obtain. Chinese historical novels (*niyai ing phongsawadan*) were a convenient means to satisfy the expanding Thai readership. Previous studies have tended to focus on the role of the Western novel in the genesis of the Thai novel and have thus neglected this popular cultural form—so popular, in fact, that publishers had difficulty satisfying the market. Thai authors made a pretence of publishing histories translated from Chinese, but in fact many of these so-called “Chinese histories” were produced in Siam. The reediting and reprinting of *Sam Kok* as an exem-

⁵³ For example, see the comic book format of Naikhacha and Chai Ratchawat, *Ngiw kanmuang* (Political Chinese Opera), (Bangkok: Praphansan, n.d.), Vol. 1, which dates from 1975.

⁵⁴ Sunan, “Authorial Messages”, chap. 4.

⁵⁵ Nai Thim Sukyang, a poet who had been severely punished by Chulalongkorn’s court for contravening proper literary conventions, was one of the authors who adapted *Sam Kok* for the *lakhon nok* theatre; see my “Sedition in Thai History: A Nineteenth-Century Poem and its Critics” in *Thai Constructions of Knowledge*, ed. Manas Chitakasem and Andrew Turton (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1991), pp. 15–36.

plary text in 1928 took place in this context of renewed hunger for Chinese historical novels. Soon thereafter the romance was fragmented and forever altered in a mock-oral version by an author who rebelled against the popular but mediocre Chinese historical novels, many of which had been invented on market demand.

Fragmentation

The Romance of the Three Kingdoms had, in fact, always been fragmented in China, in Thailand, and elsewhere in the Chinese diaspora of Southeast Asia. If we consider the way stories from *Sam Kok* circulated orally and by means of *ngiw* performances, fragmentation of the historical romance was the norm, so to speak, in the non-literate as well as the literate population. No speaker or storyteller knew all the tales; and the tales need not be told in the sequence encoded by print technology, a sequence established by scripted texts in China relatively late in the romance's history. The unity of the romance represented by its scripted or printed form, such as the exemplary text *Sam Kok* in Thai, was a constructed, conventionalized unity. As people retold the story to their family and friends, the tellers would select the bits and pieces that meant the most to them. *Sam Kok* sits on the boundary between literate and oral culture even today. Its capacity to reproduce itself lies in the extent to which people invoke *Sam Kok* characters in speech as well as in writing.

In Siam the postwar years mark another moment in the genealogy of *Sam Kok* after several decades when the Thai novel as a whole had undergone vast changes. The author of the radically new version of *Sam Kok*, "The Mendicant Storyteller's Version" (*chabap wanniphok*) first serialized in the daily press, was "Yakhop", whose real name was Chot Phraephan (1908–56).⁵⁶ Yakhop belonged to the lively literary group centred around Kulap Saipradit, an editor, essayist, and novelist who put his stamp on Thailand's literary history in the two decades before World War II. At Kulap's suggestion, Yakhop turned his talents to longer works for the express purpose of displacing the Chinese historical romances so popular at the time but which the Young Turk writers regarded as mediocre literature.

The writers of this new generation in the 1930s were proud that their "rebellion" (*patiwat*) was successful in drawing readers away from the inferior Chinese historical romances.⁵⁷ As his contribution to the rebellion, Yakhop serialized in the newspapers a historical romance known as

⁵⁶ Chot was given his pen-name by Kulap Saipradit, who named him after the British short story author W.W. Jacob who wrote for *The Strand*; see Kulap Saipradit et al., *Yakhop anuson* (In Memory of Yakhop) (Bangkok: Phrae Phitthaya, 1961), p. 71.

⁵⁷ See Kulap Saipradit's account of this literary rebellion in *Yakhop anuson*, pp. 74–5.

"Conqueror of the World" allegedly based on eight lines in a Burmese chronicle. The multi-volume novel, which Kulap Saipradit described as "a novel of great power," ran to 1,600,000 words that would have stretched for fourteen kilometres. The story about a Burmese king and his lovers came to typify a popular genre known as *roprop rakrak*, or "wars and love affairs".⁵⁸ Romantic novels of this kind dramatized issues of choice and equality at a time when the meaning of Thai nationalism was being debated in the daily press, the civil legal code was being reformed, and the country was being shaken by the fall of the absolute monarchy. Such novels, also found in the colonized countries of Southeast Asia (Malaya, Vietnam, Indonesia), encouraged the thinking in "simultaneous time" noted by Benedict Anderson, a change in consciousness that made possible the imagined national community.⁵⁹

From 1943 to 1955 Yakhop rewrote *Sam Kok* by re-sorting the stories into biographies of eighteen major characters.⁶⁰ The title "The Mendicant Storyteller's Version" came from the streetside storytellers mentioned earlier who read aloud to illiterate labourers at day's end. According to Yakhop's preface, the listeners would select episodes that featured their favourite characters. Thus his rewriting of the story cycle aimed to reproduce in printed form the format people preferred in experiencing the stories aurally. In the course of telling the stories of the eighteen characters Yakhop impersonated the story teller and engaged the reader in dialogue, thus drawing attention to the communicative act of telling stories and contriving to return the story cycle to orality.⁶¹

As a counterpoint to Yakhop's identification with the mendicant storyteller and his indigent listener, the aristocratic author, politician, and inveterate parodist Kukrit Pramoj wrote two versions mocking Yakhop's mock-oral version. The first, published in 1949, celebrated a fictional character barely perceptible in *Sam Kok*, Beng Heck, a plucky Thai commoner who struggles against the mighty Chinese empire.⁶² Such a

⁵⁸ For Yakhop's own comments on how this genre of historical novel differed from history, see his preface to *Phu chana sip thit* (Conqueror of the World) (Bangkok: Phadung Suksa, 1966).

⁵⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1992).

⁶⁰ Yakhop's version relied heavily on the English translation of *Sanguo yanyi* by C.H. Brewitt-Taylor. A paperback set of selections from the eighteen biographies has been reprinted ten times since 1987 by Dokya Press; the latest reprint at the time of writing is January 1992.

⁶¹ Malinee, "Thai Adaptation", chap. 8 discusses the narrative technique at length.

⁶² Kukrit Pramoj, *Beng heck phu thuk klun thang pen* (Beng Heck [Meng Hou]: *The One Who was Swallowed Up*) (Bangkok: Kaona Press, 1972). In his preface Kukrit takes a poke at his esteemed fellow writer Yakhop by saying that the Beng Heck version is written with no pretence of dispensing knowledge (*khwamru*) or ideology (*latthi*) whatsoever; it is simply an entertaining tale to be told over a good meal and plenty of whisky.

character helped to feed the nationalist myth that Thai communal identity had survived Chinese domination in earlier centuries to emerge triumphant in history. It is no coincidence that, after being serialized in the daily press, the book was published in the year of the communist victory in China. One year later in 1950, Kukrit published his "Capitalist Version", another riposte to the commoner pretensions of the "The Mendicant Storyteller's Version".⁶³ In this version Kukrit reversed the roles of hero and villain and told the story from the point of view of Jo Cho whom the exemplary text by Hon in the First Reign had portrayed as a mostly unattractive character. Although readers today have lost touch with the politics of the 1950s, it is entirely possible that the story in Kukrit's "Capitalist Version" should be read against the leadership struggles of that time when the author was an active politician as well as columnist. The subtitle is *Prime Minister for Life*, and Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram had been prime minister of military governments from 1947 until 1958 when he was finally toppled by Field Marshal Sarit Thannarat. Kukrit Pramoj has generally been a sarcastic critic of military governments.⁶⁴

A victim of the repression that followed the 1958 coup was Sang Phatthanothai, who fell afoul of the anticommunist regime and was jailed from 1958 to 1965. During his imprisonment he researched and wrote his own version of *Sam Kok*, which he called *The Military Tactics in Sam Kok*.⁶⁵ Sang's version, accompanied by a geographical glossary, a glossary of the protagonists, and a revised map of the three kingdoms, resembles the positivist studies of Western scholars that have sought to document the real ancient China of the three kingdoms. As in Yakhop's version, the story itself took the form of character studies or biographies.

The works by Yakhop, Kukrit, and Sang are the best known of the postwar versions of *Sam Kok*, but authors of lesser reputation produced versions that fall more or less into the genre boundaries established by the famous authors. One gets the feeling that the popular versions created a readership or market, and the lesser authors followed in the wake to take advantage of reader interest. *The Worth of Sam Kok*, for example, a collection of newspaper columns from the 1950s by a one-time teacher at Chulalongkorn University, is a didactic tome that outlines the qualities of the main characters, tells the reader eight reasons to partake of *Sam*

⁶³ Kukrit Pramoj, *Jo cho naiyok talotkan* (Cao Cao, Prime Minister for Life) (Bangkok: n.p., 1950). See also Malinee, "Thai Adaptation", pp. 255–66.

⁶⁴ Malinee, "Thai Adaptation", pp. 266–7 attributes the success of Kukrit's version to its controversial evaluation of the characters and to its "novelty in content", but she does not consider a more political reading. The possibility that the "Capitalist Version" has a subtext identifying Jo Cho as Phibun deserves to be investigated further.

⁶⁵ Sang Phatthanothai, *Phichai songkhram samkok* (The Military Tactics in Sam Kok) (Bangkok: n.p., 1969; reprinted in 1986 and 1992); see also Malinee, "Thai Adaptation", pp. 241–50, 275, n. 69.

Kok, and contains a piece on knights (*asawin*), the term by which Police General Phao Siyanon's thugs were known.⁶⁶ There was at least one military version that preceded Sang's study. Published by a graduate of the Thai air force school in 1954 who had clearly received training in one of the American war colleges and who held a navy rank, *Sam Kok, The Military Edition* is an interesting document that shows the entanglements of war and politics. It is an effort to modernize *Sam Kok* and thus to domesticate the language and concepts of modern warfare ("nuclear war", "proxy war", "psychological warfare", etc.).⁶⁷

The popularity of versions that drew on the alleged knowledge of military strategy in *Sam Kok* is linked to the security concerns of the 1950s stirred by the communist victory in China, the growing alliance with the American government to fight communism, and the Cold War mentality that the military regimes adopted to position themselves in relation to American policy. The year 1952 saw the first publication of the Thai translation of the Chinese "Art of War" by Sunzi.⁶⁸ This text, reprinted many times and distributed as a cremation volume at the funerals of army leaders such as General Kris Sivara in 1976, still has a place in the curriculum of the Thai military academy. Its appearance in Thai in the early years of the Cold War suggests that with China the clear and present danger to the region, classical Chinese texts might help understand the enemy's strategy and tactics. The applicability of a traditional Chinese text on the art of war to the operations of the modern Thai army might repay closer scrutiny. What, exactly, are military cadets supposed to learn from this work? Is it simply a manual of timeless maxims, such as "all warfare is based on deception?" Or is it intended to inculcate in military cadets who will one day hold executive state power the very habits of mind to be found in the tricks, strategies, and risktaking of the *Sam Kok* characters? The fragmentation of *Sam Kok* in the 1950s and 1960s on the basis of its specifically military content is connected, I would suggest, to the proposition that there are lessons in the exercise of power to be learned from *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Mongkhonchai Hemmarit, comp., *Nangsu sam kok di yangrai* (The Worth of Sam Kok) (Bangkok: Dokya, 1989). On Phao's knights see Thak Chaloemtiarana, *Thailand: The Politics of Despotic Paternalism* (Bangkok: Social Science Association of Thailand, 1979), p. 82.

⁶⁷ Nawa-ek Somphop Phirom, *Sam kok chabap senathikan* (*Sam Kok, The Military Edition*) (Bangkok: Wathin Phaplikhechan, 1991).

⁶⁸ Sunzi, *Tamra phichai songkhram khong sun wu* (Sunzi's The Art of War), trans. and comp. Sathian Wirakun (Bangkok: Ko Kai, 1986). There are various offshoots of the Chinese "Art of War", for example a volume that cross-fertilizes the genres, as it were, by fitting Sunzi's text to various narratives of war, including *Sam Kok*. See Bunsak Saengrawi, *Tamra phichai songkhram sun wu phak patibat* (Sunzi's "Treatise on War" and its Applications) (Bangkok: Ko Kai, n.d.); the Chinese original was published in Hong Kong.

⁶⁹ Somphop, Military Edition, p. 16.

Commodification

Following the normalization of Thai relations with China in the mid-1970s, a geopolitical realignment took place. By the early 1980s the communist insurgency, aided and abetted by the Chinese Communist Party, was neutralized, and China ceased to be the bogey it had been portrayed by the anticommunist policies of military regimes dating back to the 1930s. Thousands of Thai nationals of Chinese lineage have been able to visit their ancestral homeland and to rediscover their Chineseness. Sang Phattanothai, for example, who became reacquainted with his Chineseness in prison while working on *Sam Kok*, travelled to China in 1978 and wrote a memoir of his experiences, one of many such accounts by Thai-born pilgrims returning to their origins.⁷⁰ As a consequence of this geopolitical realignment, Thai commerce and trade are linked to Chinese networks as never before.⁷¹ Business opportunities have opened up in China itself. The agribusiness and telecommunications giant Charoen Phokphan, run by descendants of Teochiu lineage, is today more heavily invested in China than in Thailand. And the growth economies of the East Asian Little Dragons are active in the development of Thai capitalism as lenders of capital, manufacturers, and markets for export products produced in Thailand. East Asian economic success has conferred a special stamp of legitimacy on the dominance of Sino-Thai entrepreneurship in the Thai economy of the 1980s and early 1990s, and with this legitimacy has come a kind of cultural cachet for Chinese culture. The commodification of Chinese identity signifies the triumph of the Sino-Thai bourgeoisie as *the* national bourgeoisie.

The process by which this has happened is related to the historical formation of Thai national identity. In the early 1980s this identity was schematized and bureaucratized, a process that served the promotion and marketing of the country to attract foreign tourists.⁷² Thai history and national culture were turned into commodities. Their representations and symbols, whether in the form of a reproduction of a Buddha image or a holiday in one of the up-market resorts on the Malay Peninsula, can

⁷⁰ Sang Phattanothai, comp., *Thiaw muang tae jiw khwam samphan rawang phrajao taksin kap phrajao krung jin* (A Journey to the Teochiu Land: Relations between King Taksin and the Chinese Emperor) (Bangkok: n.p., n.d.).

⁷¹ On the dominance of Chinese capitalists and financial conglomerates in modern Thailand, see Suehiro Akira, *Capital Accumulation in Thailand, 1855–1985* (Tokyo, The Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1989), chaps. 5.3 and 7.3. See also Krirkkiat Phipatseritham and Kunio Yoshihara, *Business Groups in Thailand* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1983), chap. 2. In view of the way Chinese lineage is part and parcel of the national political economy today, the notion of “indigenous” entrepreneurship in the latter work now seems spurious.

⁷² Reynolds, *National Identity*, p. 17.

now be purchased and "experienced". Thai culture has become a taste, one of many that perforce compete against the commodifications of other national cultures in the region or elsewhere. Chinese culture is another consumer product sold in Thailand and must now be seen as a subculture within the officially recognized national culture schema. Subcultures, whether they be hill tribe, Chinese, Mon, or Lao, may be distinctively different from the "standard" national culture, but they are no longer so threatening that they must be marginalized or otherwise diminished. On the contrary, they make the tourist adventure more diverse and attractive.

Examples of this commodification of Chinese culture arising from the general commodification of Thai national culture abound. Various cultural productions—literature, material culture, heritage—are put forth to satisfy the appetites not only of those with Chinese lineage but of any Thai cultural consumer. Books on Chinese customs and art, among other things, testify to this veritable efflorescence of Chinoiserie, to decontextualize that venerable term, in Thailand.⁷³ The magazine *Sinlapa watthantham* (Art and Culture), which has become a thick, glossy, high-quality production, has featured many articles on Chinese culture since the mid-1980s at least and may be taken to be emblematic of the postmodern conservation and commodification of all aspects of culture in Thailand.⁷⁴ Following the Bangkok bicentennial celebrations in 1982, the business magazine *Sen thang setthakit* (Economic Outlook) published two large volumes on Chinese culture in Bangkok, testifying to the achievement of China-born Thai nationals and their descendants in all walks of life.⁷⁵ Thai nationals who are children (*luk jin*) of Chinese-born parents are relearning their Chineseness, as it were, and taking pride in the process.

Although it is now acceptable to be Chinese in Thailand, one can be too sanguine about what this means for Sino-Thai relations in contemporary Thailand. There is still plenty of evidence that the discursive formation about Chinese ethnicity continues to subjugate or control Chinese identity by simultaneously recognizing it and keeping it alien. Chineseness is allocated a special, nonthreatening space from which it may from time to time be summoned to become the alien "Other" of Thai-ness. The tolerance and even celebration of Chineseness in Thai public life, for example, has yet to extend to the state's willingness to allow Chinese-

⁷³ See, for example, a book on *feng shui*, the traditional Chinese science of divination: La-iat Silanoi, comp., *Foeng Sui* (Bangkok: Odeon Store, 1991).

⁷⁴ For example, see *Sinlapa watthantham*, 7:1 (Nov. 1985) on Chinese shrines, temples, and residences in Bangkok; 7:4 (Feb. 1986) on Chinese New Year in the People's Republic of China; and 13.4 (Feb. 1992) on Chinese food in Thailand. The magazine has featured a series by "Jin Sao Lin" on Chinese clan names in recent issues (1991–92).

⁷⁵ Bunthoet, *200 Years of the Chinese*, and the companion volume edited by Witthaya Witamnuaykhun (Bangkok: Senthang Setthakit, 1987).

language schools to flourish. Prominent Sino-Thai business people still experience slights and the occasional shakedown "to grease the wheels" (*yot namman*) from Thai bureaucrats, according to Krit Sombatsiri, a Sino-Thai who was secretary of the National Economic and Social Development Board. As a youngster Krit remembers being harassed and constantly asked for his identity papers and even in the late 1980s finds himself occasionally called *towkay* (Chinese trader) by taxi drivers.⁷⁶ An instance of the power of Chineseness to mark the alien and the "un-Thai" in the early 1990s was the circulation of handbills (*bai pliw*) after the May 1992 demonstrations and massacres. These handbills, of unknown authorship but issued presumably at the direction of the security forces who were responsible for the violent crackdown, sought to defame the leaders of the Confederation of Democracy who organized the demonstrations by alleging that they had Chinese clan names (*sae*). Thus, it was intimated that the leaders of the democratic movement harboured intentions that were anti-Thai and detrimental to the national community.⁷⁷

In any case, the kinds of affiliations mapped out by reproductions and applications of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, many of which are translations from Chinese, indicate how the present Thai social formation has objectified the dynamic qualities of the Sino-Thai entrepreneurship mentality by making it into a product. *Sam Kok* is used to supply apothegms that rationalize or privilege strategies of manipulation that lead to profane-world success. This mentality is now being packaged, sold, and studied to learn the secrets of successful managers, as the many books, articles, and columns in the business magazines testify. Several Thai writers excel in this packaging of the Sino-Thai entrepreneur mentality, which emphasizes timing and acceptable risktaking. For the medium-sized entrepreneur an instinct for the right price, time, and place counts for more than the complex management skills appropriate to large enterprises.

Thongthaem Natjamnong, who went to China after the 6 October 1976 coup and learned Chinese well enough to study physiology there, has translated Chinese works and annotated them for the manager on the way up: *Strategies from Sam Kok: A Manual for Managing in Conditions of War* and *War in Sam Kok: Strategies for Turning Things Around*.⁷⁸ The genre that advises business types on how to be successful is a peculiarly

⁷⁶ Krit Sombatsiri, *Jek sakdina*, pp. 54–55, 105–8.

⁷⁷ I am indebted to Julaporn Euaraksakul for this information (personal communication, 30 October 1992).

⁷⁸ Thongthaem Natjamnong, trans. and ed. *Konlayut sam kok khamphi borihan nai phawa songkhram* (Strategies from Sam Kok: A Manual for Managing in Conditions of War) (Bangkok: Dokya, 1989) (now in its fourth printing) and *Songkhram sam kok konlayut phlik sathannakan* (War in Sam Kok: Strategies for Turning Things Around) (Bangkok: Dokya, 1990) (now in its third printing).

global thing that traffics back and forth effortlessly between East and West. It is no coincidence that the publisher of these books advertizes in the end papers the autobiography of Lee Iacocca, the American supersalesman of Chrysler automobiles. In June 1992 Bunsak Saengrawi, another specialist in this genre, wrote a column in one of the weekly magazines in which he cited Iacocca's salespitch technique in one paragraph and lessons for managers out of *Sam Kok* in the next.⁷⁹ Thongthaem, who also writes columns and essays on *Sam Kok* and other Chinese topics under the pen-names "Jin Sao Lin" and "Chotchuang Nadon", claims books of this kind are now taught in Thai business courses and are cherished by military officers.⁸⁰ The phenomenon is as if stories about Charlemagne were rewritten for students in the Harvard Business School.

To put the issue in a slightly different perspective, is it conceivable that the war manuals studied in West Point, Sandhurst, or the Australian Defence Force Academy would tell business people in America, England, or Australia anything that would help them turn their companies around? Would an American business person state, as a Hong Kong tycoon did recently, that Japan, bombed by the American thermonuclear weapon in 1945, retaliated, as it were, by dropping Sonys and Toyotas on America twenty years later? The deployment of military strategy as business strategy has a distinctive historical formation in East Asian business culture. More grandly, what may be called the "culture of strategy" of the Little Dragon economies of East Asia effectively decentres Western capitalism as the only, or even the most impressive, model of capitalism in the contemporary world.

Finally, the several restaurants featuring Chinese banquet cuisine that would be the envy of any Chinese diner in Hong Kong, Singapore, or Taiwan serve to exemplify the place that Chineseness and Sino-Thai heritage now occupy in the cultural life of Bangkok. One of these restaurants is called "Jao Sua". One of its advertisements reads in part:

How the people at the jao sua level have to fight, how they have to struggle, how hard they have to work . . . to attain their present standing, a position that goes by the name of jao sua. Whatever people at the jao sua level want they should be able to have, even when it comes to food.

Jao sua, it will be recalled, was an eighteenth-century term for the wealthy merchant mandarins who participated in the junk trade with China. Though sometimes translated as "millionaire", a better translation of *jao sua* in English with its connotations of power and influence as well as wealth is "tycoon", itself a loanword from Chinese.

⁷⁹ *Lak thai*, 15–21 June 1992. See also Bunsak, *The Art of Managing People*.

⁸⁰ Interview, Bangkok, 15 June 1992.

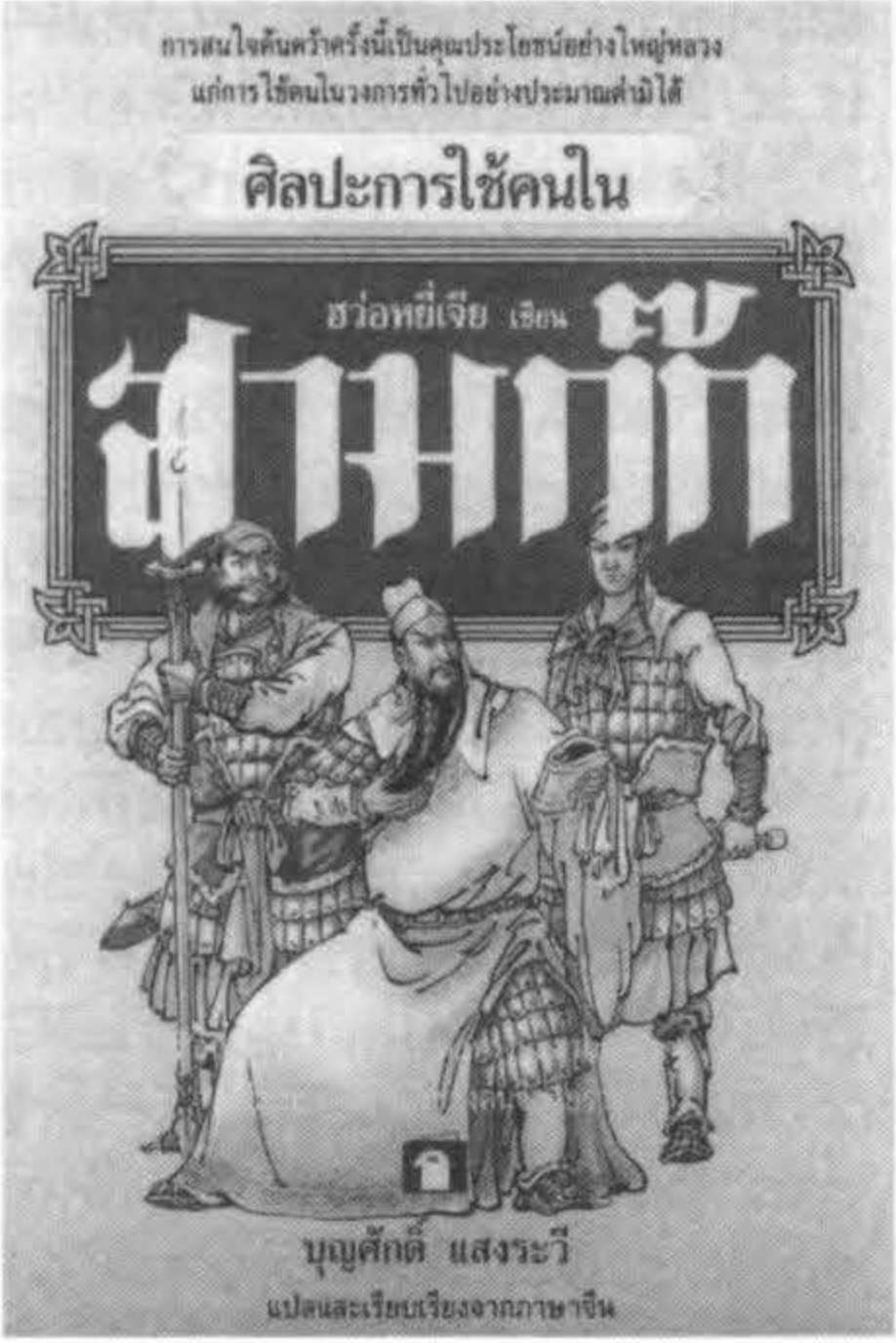
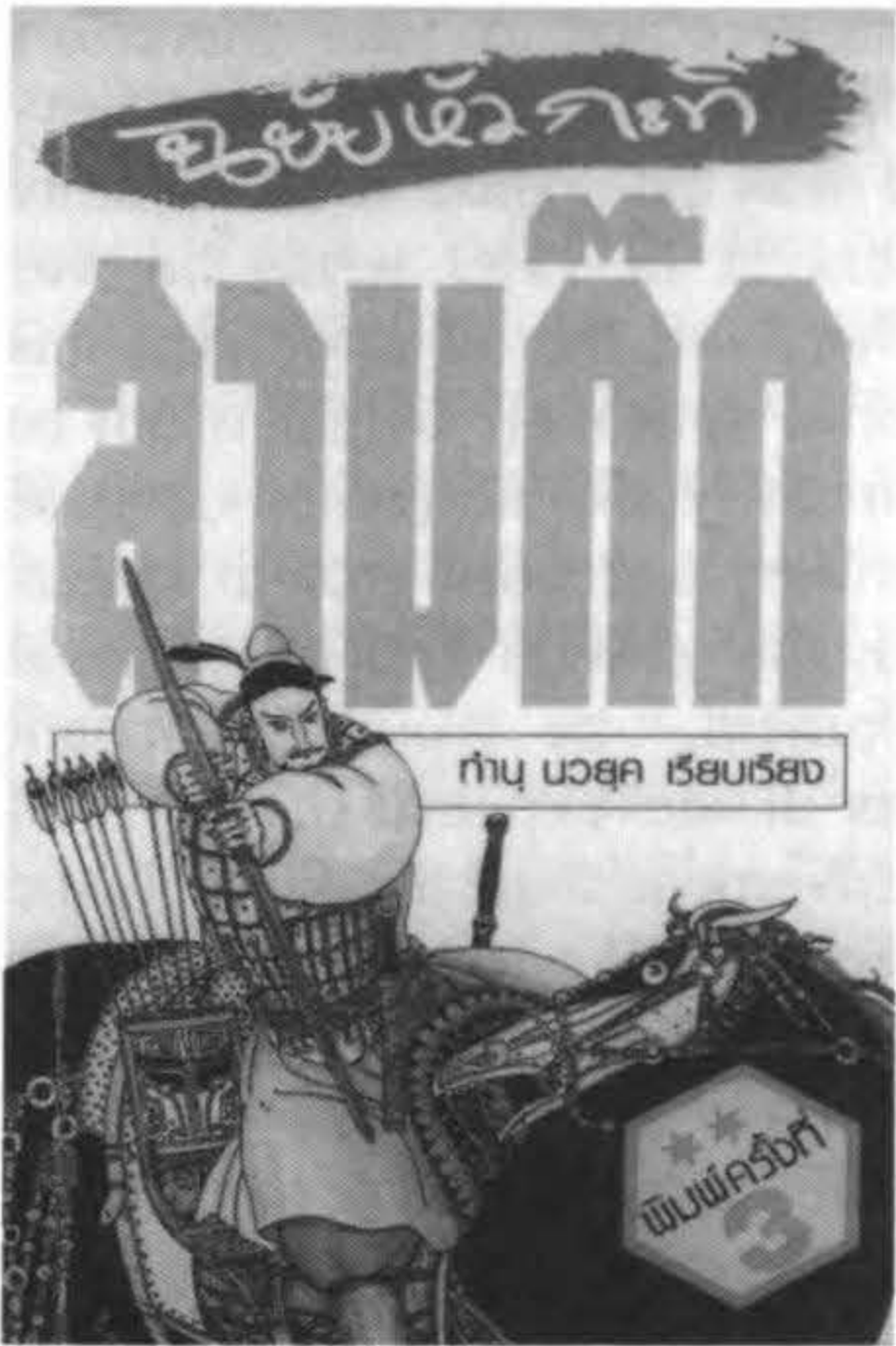


Figure 6. Four Thai paperbacks in the *Sam Kok* genre. Subtitles, clockwise from the top left: the cream of *Sam Kok*, the art of utilizing people, wisdom of the East, memorable passages.

This advertisement for "Jao Sua" Restaurant is dressed up in imperial red and gold on high gloss paper, and the typeface in Thai characters is stylized to look like Chinese ideographs, a common technique to signify "Chinese" in the world of Thai print. It was published in the vanity biography of General Chaowalit Yongchaiyut in 1989 when he was manoeuvring to become prime minister. Why did the ad appear in this place, presumably with the general's editorial approval? Might it not be read as a reassurance to the successful business types, the tycoons, whose business acumen had helped drive the economy to record growth targets in the second half of the 1980s? After all, the general had made some pointed remarks about "business development," by which he meant development which benefitted big business at the expense of the rural poor.⁸¹ Although from the time of his involvement with the Democratic Soldiers in the early 1980s he was known to have distrusted big-business groups. The politician's message of the advertisement, part of a campaign of reassurances he made in the late 1980s, was that a former supreme commander of the army was not forever wedded to statist policies but would pursue development programs, maintain economic growth, and not stand in the way of the business people who now led Thailand's economic growth.⁸² Should he become prime minister, in other words, he would not be hostile to Sino-Thai moneymaking. In the event, his campaign for the job of prime minister was unsuccessful, and his ambition was checked by the military coup of 23 February 1991.

Mythification

On the cover of one "how to" book that takes shameless advantage of *Sam Kok*'s popularity in order to peddle advice on how to be a success in business appears the proverb "don't plan anything big until you've read *Sam Kok*".⁸³ This proverb has about it the ring of ancient wisdom, or so readers who bought the book reported to the translator. In fact this translator, responsible for placing the "don't plan anything big" slogan on the book cover, gleefully told me that he invented the phrase in the interests of increasing the sales volume of the publication. The bogus proverb carries a positive valence: *Sam Kok* may be read with profit; it can help you. It is a parody—a counter-proverb, as it were—to the widely quoted remark that "anyone who has read *Sam Kok* three times cannot be trusted".⁸⁴

⁸¹ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 23 Nov. 1989, p. 26.

⁸² For background on military-statist distrust of big business from which Chaowalit was distancing himself, see "Happy Together", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 18 February 1988.

⁸³ "Yang mi dai an sam kok ya phung khit kan yai"; Thongthaem, *Konlayut samkok* (Strategies from *Sam Kok*).

⁸⁴ "Khrai an sam kok thung sam jop khop mai dai".

This saying, rather more deserving to be called a proverb because it is known to many Thai-speakers and does seem to wear the patina of age, carries a negative valence: knowledge of strategic deception in *Sam Kok*, i. e. tricks, deviousness, and duplicity, is dangerous if it falls into the wrong hands. Yet even for the righteous, a certain amount of cunning and dissembling is a necessary means to ends.

The valences in the two “proverbs” may be polar opposites, but the messages complement each other and tip us off about something else at work in the secondary orality of *Sam Kok*, namely, the way it has come to mythify political behaviour. The main characters of *Sam Kok* are bigger than life and, as such, they are deployed as archetypes to enlarge the actions of public figures, particularly army generals. The *Sam Kok* stories, while sited in a remote, fabulized China of yesteryear, explain what the powerful have to do to attain power or maintain their hold on it. Despite, or perhaps because of, the concerns that the Thai public now have about electoral politics, political organization that stands for something more than self-aggrandizement, corruption in public life, vote-buying in elections, and so forth, political behaviour is actually “read” according to clever moves and nimble manoeuvres rather than skilful use of the parliamentary system. Democracy is a wispy abstraction when it comes to the way powerful bureaucrats or army generals actually behave.

In June 1992, for example, when the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Dr Arthit Urairat, led General Somboon Rahong, the choice of the powerful Class 5 military faction, to believe that he would be appointed prime minister of an interim government, then turned instead to Anand Panyacharun as the chosen one and left General Somboon dressed in full formal attire with a house full of proud and expectant friends and family and absolutely nothing to celebrate, the deception was right out of *Sam Kok*. Dr Arthit’s guile and stealth were widely admired, and it is precisely such qualities that the *Sam Kok* characters display in abundance. In the case of Dr Arthit’s painstaking behind-the-scenes manoeuvring with the palace, the military-based parties, and the Confederation for Democracy, the guile was seen as in the interests of the greater public good and the stability of the country.

In Thai political discourse there is a history of using terminology for men from the security services (police, soldiers, and paramilitary types) that objectifies their powers and excesses. I have already mentioned the *asawin*, or “knights”, the corps of followers of Police General Phao Siyanon who carried out deadly missions on his behalf. Following the massive popular uprising in October 1973 when a regime fell and the three military dictators were forced to leave the country, military leaders came to be known with opprobrium as *khun suk*, translated into English by Thai speakers as “militarists”. In fact, the anachronistic overtones of the more

literal translation of *khun suk*, “warlords”, seem just right when one considers the eponymic powers of the *Sam Kok* characters. In recent years comparisons with the *Sam Kok* characters have almost always involved top army generals, on many of whom an honorific “Big” (Thai, *bik*) has been conferred by the media.⁸⁵ It is these “Big Men”—“big” in the sense of influential (*yai*) because of their power, not their girth; the present generation is somewhat leaner than the previous one—who come to be impaled on the journalist’s pen or flattered as embodying the qualities of particular *Sam Kok* characters.

During 1990 when General Chaowalit was manoeuvring to become prime minister—the timing for him was awkward, because the prime ministership was then an elective office, and the general had never run for office—the mass media frequently compared him to Khong Beng (Zhuge Kongming), the loyal general whose intellect and grace under pressure distinguish his career. In September 1990 at a press conference General Chaowalit feigned rejection of the comparison. *Sam Kok*, he said, was a novel about war and the struggle for power and did not have a part in his personal ideology. He went on to allay public apprehensions that the army might seize power, reminding the journalists that when he had been supreme commander he had kept the army out of direct political involvement.⁸⁶ Yet in his vanity biography, a vehicle for lifting his public profile and projecting the statesman-like qualities that would be seen to qualify him for the prime ministership, the comparison was more than apt. The anonymous biographer, while professing that journalists were responsible for the Khong Beng comparison, nevertheless saw General Chaowalit to be the very embodiment of the *Sam Kok* general, a quick-thinking man who could solve problems using his intelligence.⁸⁷ In fact, having masterminded the final suppression of the Communist Party of Thailand in the early 1980s by offering amnesty, a more deft and bloodless way of managing insurgency than that employed by previous military leaders, Chaowalit had already acquired a reputation for being more enlightened than his peers and predecessors.

As both the bogus and authentic proverbs about the romance suggest, *Sam Kok* in the popular imagination is a story cycle that contains knowl-

⁸⁵ Thus, Big Te (Air Chief Marshal Kaset Rojananin), Big Tui (General Issarapong Nunphakdi), Big Jor (General Sunthorn Khongsomphong), Big Jiw (General Chaowalit Yongchaiyut), Big Su (General Suchinda Kraprayoon).

⁸⁶ *Matichon Sutsapda*, 9 September 1990. General Chaowalit’s reassurances on this score were to prove prophetically wrong, as other generals seized power in a coup on 23 February 1991.

⁸⁷ *Chiwit lae phonngan phon ek chawalit yongchaiyut khong beng haeng kong thapbok* (The Life and Works of General Chawalit Yongchaiyut, the Khong Beng of the Army) (Bangkok: Ho Cho Ko, n.d.), p. 10.

edge endowing the knower with special powers. Yakhop in the preface to "The Mendicant's Storyteller's Version" affirms that this knowledge is worthy of being called a "science" (*sastra*), as it yields knowledge of the self and of others. This knowledge is not specific to the military, being advantageous, as we have seen, to business people and politicians as well, but almost always it is the generals who are tagged as larger-than-life *Sam Kok* characters. The explicit comparisons are gendered in the sense that only male leaders are likened to the characters, hardly surprising since the few women in *Sam Kok* are mostly hapless relatives. Military prowess is understood as more than just a matter of logistics, deployment of personnel, ingenious deployment of inadequate resources, tactics for different types of struggle, but as a faculty of distinctly masculine intellect. Loyalty and revenge for betrayal of trust, perhaps the dominant theme in *Sam Kok*, are very much a part of the make-up of this mentality. In this context *Sam Kok* contributes not only to the reproduction of values and expectations that have helped to keep the military in power but also to the murderous side of Thai political culture. Along with other cultural representations it has helped to fashion a martial culture that extends beyond the barracks and the military camps in the countryside. The Thai military is welded to society in a complicated way, and the weld will not be broken simply by refusing non-elected generals the prime ministership or removing them from the directorships of state enterprises, as happened in the dramatic events of 1992.

Yet as with any cultural product that is widely disseminated in its multitudinous forms, even encapsulated in proverbs, the text is polysemic and multivocalic. There is nothing inherent in the romance that supports authoritarianism or its ideological opposites—doctrines of liberation, autonomy, and self-determination—although *Sam Kok* is sometimes regarded scornfully as recommending political behaviour that threatens open politics and empowerment of the disenfranchised. Thus, wrote a columnist in the weeks following the May 1992 massacre, the country would be better off if the leadership put aside *Sam Kok* and lives of "great" men such as Hitler and Napoleon and instead read more birth stories of the Buddha.⁸⁸ This is the *Sam Kok* of dirty tricks and unscrupulous methods, against which the proverb "don't trust anyone who has read *Sam Kok* three times" warns. Sometimes such warnings carry a tinge of xenophobia, a fear and suspicion of what is foreign and alien, underscoring the extent to which the work, and all it is seen to stand for, is still lodged in the Chinese landscape. Even after all this time, the sedimentary layers of foreign "manual" learning (*tamra*), whether Chinese or Western, can still be scraped away, leaving the old fossil of "original" Thai-ness

⁸⁸ *Phu chatkan raiwan*, 6–7 June 1992.

in the person of Thai genius. The traditional Thai trickster, Si Thanonchai, is unbeatable when matched against the *Sam Kok* characters, said a newspaper columnist in November 1990.⁸⁹ The subtext here is that anything that is detrimental to Thailand or to "the Thai people" comes from outside, from abroad, from some other place, as we saw with the anonymous handbills that attempted to discredit the democracy movement by intimating that the leadership was Chinese.

But admonitions against reading *Sam Kok* because the advice to leaders therein is foreign and leads to unscrupulous politics misses the point that there is also something in the romance that gives heart to the little person, the powerless, or the disadvantaged. Khong Beng is a favourite character with Thai readers, because he can defeat his adversaries by using his wits rather than by force of arms.⁹⁰ Many readers enjoy most the episode when Khong Beng, forced to do battle with Sima Yi against overwhelming odds, transforms his fortress into a zone of tranquillity and peace-time normality. Sima Yi charges into the compound to find no soldiers in sight and Khong Beng calmly playing his lute. Certain that a trick is being perpetrated that will cost him the battle, the general quickly retreats. Strategic deception wins the day for Khong Beng, who triumphs without spilling a drop of his army's blood. The weak are by no means powerless, but they must be clever to get the better of their adversaries.

In this context *Sam Kok* is popular with Thai readers because it speaks with equivalent empathy to the many powerless who wish to become empowered and to the very few who are already powerful. It may be, too, that *Sam Kok* is popular because it reifies the idea that political power is not primarily to be used for the common good but rather for private gain. That is, the gains from the exercise of power are to be shared in the first instance with friends, relatives, and protégés, and the powerless as well as the powerful can aspire to distribute boons of their material success in the same way.

⁸⁹ *Thai rat*, 26 Nov. 1990. The columnist "Sum" made these comments when the government led by Chatchai Chunnawan (Si Thanonchai) had just negotiated its way through a cabinet reshuffle that required balancing off powerful antagonists: General Chaowalit (Khong Beng) and General Suchinda (Sima Yi). On Si Thanonchai, see Viggo Brunn, "The Trickster in Thai Folktales" in *Rural Transformation in Southeast Asia*, ed. Christer Gunnarsson et al. (Lund: Nordic Association for Southeast Asian Studies, 1987), pp. 77-93; and Maenduan Tipaya, comp. *Tales of Sri Thanonchai, Thailand's Artful Trickster* (Bangkok: Naga Books, Patamini Ltd, 1991).

⁹⁰ See, for example, a rewriting of the *Sam Kok* story cycle by Thianchai Iamworamet, *Sam kok parithat* (*Sam Kok Reviewed*) (Bangkok: Bamrungsan, 1980); now in its third printing), over half of which is devoted to Khong Beng, and the same author's five-part series on Khong Beng, "*Wikhro sam kok*" (*Analyzing Sam Kok*), in the business magazine *Thurakit lak sap*, beginning 2-8 Dec. 1991. Images of Khong Beng are thought to possess special powers (*saksit*) at Chinese temples and are the objects of homage in the form of flowers, incense, and candles at Chinese New Year in the expectation of auspicious results.

Today in Thailand the tycoons are trying to rid themselves of the warlord partners that are increasingly anachronistic in the present Thai social formation. Yet the “war is business” and “business is war” vocabulary of behaviour, morality, and political style supplied by the sinic, Thai-ified *Sam Kok* and all its kin genres, a vocabulary that comes naturally to both groups and gives voice to their aspirations and passions, suggests that tycoons and warlords have more in common than is acknowledged by the dreams for their once-and-forever dissociation.

The Vicissitudes of
Maritime Trade:
Letters from the
Ocean *Hang*
Merchant, Li Kunhe,
to the Dutch
Authorities in
Batavia (1803–09)

Leonard Blussé

In contrast to their European competitors in the Asian maritime trade, Chinese entrepreneurs of the early modern period have left us with only a few scraps of their trade correspondence. This stems without doubt from the low esteem in which traders were held within Confucian society. It is inconceivable that the Chinese imperial government would have ever granted to a single Chinese overseas shipping company or companies the far-reaching charters and privileges, that the English and Dutch East India Companies were given by their governments at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Overseas activities beyond the reach of the mandarinates were looked upon with great suspicion. Emigration was curtailed by draconian laws. As a result, the historian does not come across well-organized collections of records of once flourishing but now defunct shipping companies in Chinese archives.

By contrast, the well-preserved archives of such Western trading institutions as the English and Dutch East India Companies abound in records produced by all levels of the Company hierarchy: they vary from outlines of strategy produced by the directors at the top to reports of activities by the Company servants stationed in Asia. The voluminous source publication of the correspondence of Jan Pieterszoon Coen—who was

twice Governor-General of the Dutch East India Company, or VOC (1619–23, 1627–29)—shows how articulate Company servants often were in their reports.¹

In Coen's *Bescheiden*, the Governor-General and many of his correspondents emerge as formidable letter-writers, no matter how eloquent or curt, arrogant or amiable they were as people. Today's historian—even if repelled by the often sanguinary views about Asian society held by the seventeenth-century pioneers—cannot help feeling indebted to these men for the precious historical information they provide.

While it is quite possible, thanks to the companies' excellent record keeping, to delve into European personalities, aims, trade strategies, and frame of mind towards people of other cultural backgrounds, the movements of the Asian actors on the market scene, to say nothing of their thoughts, remain elusive. In real life Asian merchants were no doubt just as colourful and outrageous in their behaviour as their European counterparts, yet, even though they were carrying out their trade on their own ground, in modern historical literature they are commonly referred to in impersonal terms as "the Malay merchant" or "the Chinese merchant", with or without "portfolio". Certain questions are irresistible: What was the agenda of a Chinese merchant? How did he relate to his European counterparts and competitors? How closely did they co-operate? Did Chinese traders really entice (*gou-yin*) their foreign counterparts into illicit deals, as the Chinese authorities repeatedly asserted? Were pseudo-ritual codes of behaviour perhaps worked out between Asian merchants and the fledgling colonial regimes in order to lubricate their dealings with each other?

While no enduring world civilization has bequeathed such voluminous historical records to posterity as China's, the kinds of Chinese records that have been preserved in China tell us very little about the people involved in overseas trade. Whenever trade is mentioned in official records it is in the context of the imperial revenue system. As a result, the machinations of Chinese maritime merchants have remained largely hidden from the gaze of the modern researcher. This makes it difficult to empathize with the Chinese merchant abroad or with those who sent him overseas and financed his operations.

Using circumstantial evidence derived from Company records it has been possible to reconstruct a few biographies of Chinese *towkay*, such as Batavian *kapitan cina* or Chinese building contractors, who were closely involved in Company operations.² Wang Dai-Hai's *Hai-dao yi-zhi*, irrev-

¹ H.T. Colenbrander and W.Ph. Coolhaas eds., *Jan Pieterszoon Coen; Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf in Indië*, 7 vols. (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1919–53).

² See, for instance, B. Hoetink, "So Bing Kong: Het eerste hoofd der Chinezen te Batavia", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde van de Koninklijk Instituut* 73 (1917),

erently translated as *The China-man Abroad* is one of the very few contemporary Chinese sources in which Chinese Nanyang merchants come to life through anecdotal tales.³ We meet a Fujian merchant sailing the Indonesian waters in the charming company of valiant Bugis female slaves who repulse a pirate attack, or the Chinese captain of Semarang who built a lodge in Batavia both to take care of, and recruit, Chinese newcomers who arrived encumbered with debts.

Compared to the East India Companies, Chinese overseas trading institutions, known as *yang-hang* or "Ocean Firms", were relatively small businesses that annually sent about a hundred junks in total along the so-called "western" and "eastern" routes to Southeast Asian destinations situated a monsoon-voyage distant from the home port.⁴ The *yang-hang* did not need the elaborate reporting structure of the European companies, which dispatched their servants much farther away from home. Only in a few, rare cases have archival records from these Chinese overseas trading companies been saved. A fascinating example of this is the discovery of the collection of early nineteenth-century trade correspondence of such a company of Chinese traders, that was dug up in the 1950s by Professor Yanai Kenji out of a pile of old papers, stacked in the warehouse of a rag-and-bone merchant in Nagasaki.⁵

The predicament in which historians find themselves *vis-à-vis* "the unknown Chinese overseas trader" is illustrated by the studies on early modern Sino-Siamese trade with which Jennifer Cushman and Sarasin Viraphol set such a standard during the 1970s for subsequent historians. Both authors focused on Chinese trading networks, but the men who operated these networks remain well nigh invisible to the reader.

Viraphol's study is probably the better known. It was published shortly after he had successfully defended it as his doctoral thesis at Harvard.⁶ Cushman's dissertation, which was submitted at Cornell University one

pp. 344–415, or "Testament to a Towkay: Jan Con, Batavia and the Dutch China Trade" in Leonard Blussé, *Strange Company: Chinese Settlers, Mestizo Women, and the Dutch in VOC Batavia* (Leiden: Foris, 1986), pp. 49–72.

³ Ong-Tae-Hae (Wang Dai-Hai), *The Chinaman Abroad: An Account of The Malayan Archipelago, particularly of Java* (London: John Snow, 1850).

⁴ In 1727 it was stipulated that all the overseas trade should be placed under the management of the ocean *hang* (*yang-hang*) (Ng Chin-Keong, *Trade and Society, The Amoy Network on the China Coast, 1683–1735* [Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1983] p. 169).

⁵ A Chinese researcher of the Taiwan Academia Sinica, Ms Chu Te-lan, is now preparing a doctoral thesis on this subject under the direction of Professor Oba Osamu (Kansai University) and Nakamura Tadashi (Kyushu University).

⁶ Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit: Sino-Siamese Trade, 1652–1853* (Harvard East Asian Monographs, no. 76) (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1977).

year before to Viraphol's, had circulated only in its University Microfilms International edition, until Cornell's posthumous publication.⁷ The two authors employed the existing Chinese materials—almost all derived from official government sources—in fundamentally different ways. Viraphol, as befits a student of the John King Fairbank school, has focused on the tributary character of the Sino-Siamese trade. He found the Chinese court records, which stress this formal, ritual relationship, very suitable for such an undertaking. In contrast, Jennifer Cushman questioned the tribute system as a referential framework for analysing Sino-Siamese trade and brought out hitherto largely hidden aspects of private trading by Chinese maritime merchants. She discovered that this private trading was much more extensive than the official trading that occurred under the aegis of the tribute system.

Yet, for want of sources emanating from the merchants themselves, to her great regret Cushman was unable to present a single Chinese private merchant as a recognizable human being with his own aims and objectives. Instead, she was forced to work with broad categories, stating that Chinese merchants "have been arbitrarily cast, for convenience of discussion, into three major groups: carriers, consignors, and port personnel".⁸ In her discussion of the crews and life on board a Chinese junk, Cushman could make use of lively Western eyewitness reports such as that of Karl Gutzlaff, the German missionary who cruised Chinese coastal waters on board an opium-runner while handing out Christian tracts to astonished fishermen whom he met *en route*. The members of the consignors and port personnel groups (shipowners included), however, remain a blank in Cushman's analysis.

During the International Conference on Thai Studies in Bangkok (1984), Jennifer Cushman voiced her frustration at not having been able to trace any personal records concerning the policymaking and planning of the Chinese *yang-hang* that traded with Siam. The history of Chinese tinmining in nineteenth-century Thailand on which she was then working provided her with much more evidence on the human dimension. It is against the background of this lament that I should like to add this footnote to Jennifer Cushman's pioneering work on Chinese overseas trade and introduce here for the first time a *yang-hang* merchant through his own correspondence.

From occasional references in the Dutch Company archives it is known that the Governor-General in Batavia had a special relationship with the "Hoofden der handelaars te Emuy", or owners of the junks from Xiamen (Amoy), who visited Batavia every year during the northeast monsoon. Year in year out, in addition to their usual business correspondence, these

⁷ Jennifer Wayne Cushman, *Fields from the Sea: Chinese Junk Trade with Siam during the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, Studies on Southeast Asia, no. 12 (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1993).

⁸ Cushman, *Fields from the Sea*, p. 97.

yang-hang, or licensed ocean companies, from Xiamen would send presents—boxes of scented tea, gold foil, bolts of silk—for the personal use of the Governor-General, whom they traditionally addressed as the king of Ge-la-ba ([Sunda] Kelapa) or Ba-da-wei-ya (Batavia). Naturally, through the office of the *syahbandar*, or harbourmaster, the Governor-General would reciprocate with gifts like clove oil, nutmeg, and other spices. The harbourmaster would report the movements of Chinese junk shipping to Batavia to the Governor-General, never failing to include listings of the presents that were exchanged.

The recent discovery in the Leiden University library of an uncatalogued portfolio containing forty original letters written by several *yang-hang* in the period from 1790 to 1810 enables us for the first time to fathom to some extent the concerns of the *yang-hang* and the formidable challenges and various dangers that Chinese shipowners faced in the conduct of the *Nanyang* trade. Because research on the subject is now well under way—a complete, annotated translation of the letters from the different *yang-hang* is scheduled to appear in the near future—I shall concentrate here on a series of seven letters written between 1803 and 1809 by one Xiamen (Amoy) *yang-hang* trader, Li Kunhe.

As far as the East Asian trade is concerned, the period discussed is indubitably a neglected and obscure one. According to the local gazetteer of Xiamen, *Xia-men Zhi*, the trade of the *yang-hang* had all but been usurped by coastal traders who began trading illegally to overseas destinations at the end of the eighteenth century. In 1796 the number of ocean *Hang* was down to eight, and by 1813 only one remained.⁹ No doubt the hazardous conditions along the coast of China endangered by endemic piracy contributed to the decline in overseas trade, but there were other reasons as well.¹⁰ In an earlier essay on the administrative control of the junk trade to Batavia, I reached the conclusion that, by the end of the 1790s, Chinese shipping to Batavia had fallen into a decline because it had been dragged down in the death throes of the VOC.¹¹ The bundle of letters that has now emerged from the VOC Batavian *Secretarie* shows that notwithstanding a distinctive decline, junk shipping to Batavia remained stable as a result of unexpected developments.

Between 1795 and 1815 the Netherlands, caught up in the Napoleonic Wars, were apart from a brief lull in 1802 continuously at war with Britain. Scores of Dutch East Indiamen were intercepted by English men-of-war in the English Channel. All direct Dutch traffic to and from the

⁹ Ng, *Trade and Society*, pp. 170–6.

¹⁰ Dian H. Murray, *Pirates on the South China Coast, 1790–1810* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1987) p. 130.

¹¹ L. Blussé, “The VOC and the Junk Trade to Batavia: A Problem in Administrative Control” in Blussé, *Strange Company*, p. 155.

East Indian possessions was effectively brought to a halt. Due to the consequent heavy losses it suffered, the VOC collapsed in 1798. Its effects and territorial possessions in Asia were "nationalized" by the newly established revolutionary Bataafse Republiek. The way in which the beleaguered Dutch in the Indies somehow managed to continue to trade using foreign shipping has been recently described and analysed by Els van Eyck van Heslinga.¹² Ships flying American, Danish, Prussian, and Hamburg flags delivered Batavia from its isolation. Moreover, Chinese junks quickly filled the void left by the vanished East Indiamen of the VOC on the route between China and Batavia. The archival evidence is rather incomplete because a lot of documentation from this period never reached the Dutch archives. Thanks to calculations by Wouter Hendrik Ijsseldijk, Director-General of the VOC, however, we know that junk shipping to Batavia between 1798 and 1802 was as follows.¹³

1798	9 junks carrying 2235 passengers
1799	7 junks carrying 1378 passengers
1800	8 junks carrying 1338 passengers
1801	7 junks carrying 1877 passengers
1802	4 junks carrying 1138 passengers.

Occasional references in the *dagregisters*, the diaries kept at Batavia castle, indicate that until 1807 the number of junks arriving annually from China remained more or less stable at four vessels.¹⁴

One of the most important Chinese shipowners during these years was the ocean merchant, Li Kunhe, of Xiamen, who, in the autumn of 1802, announced in a letter written to Governor-General Johannes Siberg (1802–05) in Batavia that he had established a new *yang-hang*. This letter, received in Batavia on 15 February 1803, was the beginning of a regular correspondence, that continued until 1808. The contents of these letters, which are published here in translation from the Chinese for the first time, shed light on the aims, concerns, motives, and expectations of this Chinese shipowner. Of course these letters addressed to the Governor-General with certain aims in mind, are limited both by purpose and epistolary style. They begin and end in a conventional fashion, but in between we find a very businesslike approach to the matters in hand. The frank tone of the letters is of particular interest. The merchant believed that he should keep the Governor-General posted on the vicissitudes of his trade and felt that, although these could not be fully controlled, the king of Ba could

¹² E.S. van Eyck van Heslinga, *Van compagnie naar koopvaardij: De scheepvaartverbinding van de Bataafse republiek met de koloniën in Azië 1797–1806* (Amsterdam: Bataafsche Leeuw, 1988).

¹³ Algemeen Rijksarchief [henceforth ARA], The Hague, 2.01.27.02, no. 121, "Bijlage by Ijsseldijks consideratiënde werkjes van D. van Hogendorp".

¹⁴ ARA, Ministerie van Koophandel en Koloniën, no. 232, dagregister van Batavia 1807.

contribute to optimal results by ensuring that trading conditions in Batavia were kept as stable as possible. In his one-way correspondence Li Kunhe attempted to remove all possible obstacles to mutual understanding. It should be understood that, with a few exceptions, there was no formal *exchange*: letters were written by the Chinese shipowner in order to inform the Batavian authorities about certain issues. The Dutch reply was given not by letter but by administrative measures.

In January of 1803 Li Kunhe opened the correspondence by announcing the establishment of his *yang-hang*.

**1. Letter of Jiaqing Year 7, tenth day of the twelfth month
[4 January 1803]**

The Li Kunhe Ocean *Hang* of Xiamen respectfully addresses Your Royal Highness:

We have the honour to inform You that this unskilled, humble merchant is fitting out ocean vessels to engage in trade. We have often benefited from Your great Benevolence and many times we have rejoiced in Your gracious Protection. Your Majesty is a scion of Ge-la-ba's illustrious families. You are the Powerful Sovereign of the Sea.

Trade in the Eastern and Southern regions must be carried out in an honest and trustworthy manner!

The hub of land and sea traffic is managed in perfect order.

Even though we are far away and deprived of Your Eminence and Instruction, we have in fact been the recipients of Your Benevolence over many generations.

This year we have established the [Li] Kunhe Ocean *Hang* and specially fitted out a vessel, the *Rongfa* to trade with Your Country. The shipmaster, Huang Jiguan, is not well acquainted with the people and local conditions there. He is not yet familiar with all matters of business. Nonetheless, we hope You will show solicitude to him so that the accounts can be settled promptly in order to allow for the speedy return of the vessel. If that is possible, the itinerant merchants of the coastal regions will have received Your unbounded, beneficent Protection.

Because our vessel is bound for Ge-la-ba we are sending a letter of exceptional respect and wish You happiness and peace. Furthermore, we have added local products, noted down on a separate list of commodities, to present to You.

Presents:

two bolts of top quality white Chinese linen
two chests of top quality Xihe scented tea
two chests of top quality gold foil for gilding
two bolts of top quality black tribute satin.

The Li Kunhe Ocean *Hang* prostrates itself a hundred times.

The flattering introduction of Li Kunhe's letter is part and parcel of a long tradition in Chinese commercial correspondence. Two points in the letter require further explanation: it is noteworthy that the supercargo in charge of the shipowner's affairs, Huang Jiguan, had no experience in the Xiamen-Batavia trade. Li Kunhe begged the Governor-General to ensure that the trading accounts would be settled promptly. He feared that if his junk could not sail in time, it might not be able to reach its Fujian homeport during the southern monsoon. We shall find this particular concern again in all his letters.

Li Kunhe's second letter shows that his requests had been complied with.

2. Letter of Jiaqing Year 8, 12th month [January–February 1804]

A letter from the Li Kunhe Ocean *Hang* of Xiamen, that is, Li Qingen, to the king of Ge-la-ba.

Your Majesty, great wise and able ruler of Ge[-la-ba]

Please permit me to state respectfully that Ge-la-ba is a prosperous place, renowned among maritime countries. In the northern islands and southern ports, ships throng the navigation routes, merchants flock together like clouds knowing that You move and inspire the people by Your virtuous Conduct.

Your Fame is unique like that of the Great Wall. From afar, like sunflowers eagerly facing the sun, we look up to Your glorious radiance.

Last year [our] vessel, the *Rong Fa*, came to Ge-la-ba. We entrusted the command of the ship to Huang Jiguan and were the recipients of Your Benevolence and Protection yet again, so that our people returned [to Xiamen] singing and on time. Moreover, I have taken note of Your gracious gifts. I am ashamed of not possessing precious gems to repay you for them. This time I am sending the same ship again and the same people to cross the seas to Your Domain. We cannot guarantee the time of our arrival, but if we return home in time then the merchants, as well as our Ocean Trading Company, will rejoice.

The problem is that we had originally planned to send three ships to Ge-la-ba, but unexpectedly the ships bound for Melaka, Bing-lang [Penang], and Sulu were all lost at sea, and there were few ships from Xiamen that spent the winter in Luzon. Therefore I am sending only two ships to Ge-la-ba this time. All the passengers arriving from several thousand mile away had been told that three ships would be sailing for Ge-la-ba. But they did not know that this year only two ships would sail. The passengers that were to be transported on three ships are now to be carried on two ships, and consequently the number of people [on each ship] is too high. Our company knows that the [Dutch East India] Company regulates the number of migrants. The law is very severe on this point. Strictly speaking we should adhere exactly to the quota. Yet, we should allow for the fact that the

passengers who have travelled from afar to Xiamen with slender purses have made a long and difficult journey. If we were not to respond leniently to their requests to be allowed to go aboard, then those from afar would run out of money and find themselves unable to return home. The dilemma was whether to proceed or turn back. These were extremely distressing circumstances! They [the passengers] earnestly implored us to take pity. We had to accede to their entreaties. In truth they were to be pitied. Our company had no choice but to let them embark. Consequently, there are more than one hundred excess passengers.

Naturally I had to write and explain this matter to You. We hope Your Excellency will grant us a favour and permit them to go ashore. Our company will be so moved by such a decision that it will be engraved on our hearts. It goes without saying. Moreover, all our compatriots in China will be infinitely grateful. If You graciously deign to give my letter your full consideration, I would be most happy.

How my thoughts reach out to You who are so far away as I write this letter! The worthless items I am presenting to You are noted on a separate list. I hope You will accept them and I look forward to seeing You with eager anticipation.

Because members of the Fujian gentry engaged in trade only covertly, their "tradenames" were not the same as the names they used in public life. In this letter Li Kunhe unveils his real name, Li Qingen, to the Governor-General, whom he may have met in Batavia at some time in the past,¹⁵ and reveals that the *Nanyang* trade had suffered severe losses in 1803. The main theme of this letter is how to solve a possible infraction of the immigration procedures in Batavia. The immigration of Chinese settlers was a perpetual source of concern to the Dutch colonial authorities in Java, especially after the Chinese uprising of 1740. In order to avoid internecine strife between Chinese from different provinces, immigration was allowed from Xiamen only. According to the *plakaat* (edict) promulgated by Governor-General in Council on 31 March 1761, small junks were allowed to carry a total of 200 crew members and passengers, whereas large junks were allotted a quota of 250 people.¹⁶ As the *plakaat* of 10 July 1800 makes clear, there were administrative problems with the registration of the Chinese immigrants.¹⁷ While generally some 1500 "permissie-briefjes", or licences to settle, were issued every year, only 185 people had applied for a licence in the first six months of 1800. (From

¹⁵ For a discussion of merchants carrying out their activities under assumed names, see Cushman, *Fields from the Sea*, p. 150.

¹⁶ J.A. van der Chijs, ed., *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek 1602-1803* [henceforth *N.I. Plakaatboek*], vol. 7 (1755-1764) (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1890) pp. 469-71.

¹⁷ *N.I. Plakaatboek*, vol. 13, p. 138.

the information provided by Ijsseldijk we know that 1338 newcomers had actually arrived in Batavia during that same year. Many of these people must have entered as illegal immigrants or may have immediately travelled on to other ports elsewhere in the Archipelago). Because the intake of Chinese immigrants was considered to be insufficient, measures were taken to encourage legal Chinese settlement in Batavia.

In response to a report that the sugar mills in the vicinity of Batavia found themselves short-handed, on 27 July 1802 the Governor-General in Council decided to increase quotas for junks from Xiamen to 400 people for small junks and 600 for large ones, with half of the passengers being granted a residence permit valid until further notice.¹⁸ Two days later, on 29th July, new regulations were issued that again limited immigration to the Chinese from Xiamen.¹⁹ Junks from other Chinese ports were forbidden to bring in immigrants. In these circumstances, the decision of Li Kunhe to transport all those who were awaiting passage to Batavia on two junks could not have been a happier one. This becomes apparent from the third letter in which Li Kunhe expresses gratitude that his *nachodas* were not fined for bringing in too many people.

3. Letter of Jiaqing Year 9, 12th month [January 1805]

The Li Kunhe Ocean *Hang* of Xiamen respectfully addresses itself to Your Majesty,

We have the honour to inform You that these humble merchants have with their meagre capital fitted out a ship to sail to Your country to engage in trade. Even with rivers of ink and mountains of paper, Your Protection and great Benevolence towards us could not be adequately described.

Last winter when our vessel, the *Rong Fa*, arrived in Ge-la-ba with excess passengers on board, we were not fined, thanks to Your great Humanity. This adequately demonstrates that Your Generosity is as deep and wide as the ocean. You have treated the merchants from far away with beneficence. We rest our brush for a while, as there is still so much that might be said. Our ship returned with the precious presents You have again bestowed on us. As we note them down, we feel even more honoured.

This winter we have again fitted out the *Rong Fa* to sail to Your Territory. The shipmaster, *Huang Jiguan*, has often been the recipient of Your vast Benevolence. The longer he is in receipt of it, the more profoundly he appreciates it. We would be grateful for Your boundless Benevolence in protecting him as before in all respects, arrang-

¹⁸ *N.I. Plakaatboek*, vol. 13, pp. 482–83. On 5th July, 1803 an edict was issued allowing the junks from Xiamen to bring as many as 200 *orang baru* (newcomers) each during the following monsoon. *N.I. Plakaatboek*, vol. 13, p. 647.

¹⁹ *N.I. Plakaatboek*, vol. 13, pp. 483–507.

ing for early clearance of payments to allow his prompt return. We have a further request:

For several years, Chinese vessels have been few in number. For ports like Machen [Banjarmasin], Ruofu [Johore] and Lungya [Lingga Archipelago], for example, no ships have been fitted out for a long time. All those Chinese seeking to join their kinfolk and friends there must therefore go via Your Territory. The number of passengers consequently exceeds the normal quota. Out of Your kind Consideration You have magnanimously forgiven this. But this year the East India Company has informed us that, in addition to the 2 *wen* [rijksdaalder], 3 *chao* [stuiver] that have to be paid by each sailor and passenger according to the original regulation, all five hundred passengers who are allowed to enter each year will have to pay an additional fee of 2 *wen*, 2 *chao* according to the new regulations. But in the past there has never been a regulation such as this new one!

We beseech Your Majesty to bestow upon us your unchanging benevolence and to apply Your Policy according to precedent, so that our ship will not incur a loss. If there has been an unexpected excess number of passengers, our ship had no choice, as more than half of the passengers are too poor to earn a living! They stole on board after our departure! When we hoisted sail, availing ourselves of the tide, and passed [Da] dan Island [near Xiamen], we had no time to check the passengers. Once at sea, on checking the list of names we discovered that there were more people on board. On the open sea there were no boats to take them back. We felt they were most pitiful. We had [no choice but] to bow to circumstances and transport them. We hope, moreover, that You will sympathize and show Your Magnanimity by forgiving us and then making an exception so that Your Great Virtue will draw praise not only from us but from all quarters.

On our ship we are respectfully sending You some presents unworthy of You to express our sentiments towards You. We wholeheartedly hope You will accept them and wish You peace and happiness. Respectfully submitting this letter for Your perusal.

List of presents on the envelope:

tribute satin, 2 bolts

Xihe scented tea, 2 chests

Chinese white linen, 2 bolts

gold foil, 2 chests

From this letter, received by the Batavian authorities in early 1804, it becomes clear that Chinese shipping to Southeast Asia was indeed going through a slump. Travellers to the Malay Peninsula and its vicinity were forced to travel via Batavia. As I have demonstrated elsewhere,²⁰ the VOC also forced Chinese merchants destined for other ports in the Archipelago

²⁰ Blussé, *Strange Company*, pp. 147–50.

to pass through Batavia. The worries about exceeding the existing quota of passengers exposed by Li Kunhe in his letter are corroborated by the *syahbandar's* report that in February 1804 the *Rong Fa* had brought in 998 passengers, no less than 498 persons above the set quota.²¹ Clandestine boarding of Chinese junks after their departure from Xiamen had also been described in the *plakaat* of 31 March 1761 quoted above.²² The poll tax of two *wen* and three *chao*, however, does not tally with the figures given in the *Plakaatboek*.²³

4. Letter of Jiaqing Year 10, 12th month [January–February 1806]

The Li Kunhe Ocean *Hang* of Xiamen respectfully addresses a letter to Your Highness, the Vice-Roy of Ge[-la-ba].²⁴

We respectfully believe that Ge-la-ba is a prosperous country and renowned among maritime countries.

You govern Your Territory and have pacified the surrounding countries.

The multicoloured flags and banners reflect the prosperity of the West. Your personal adornments symbolize the peace reigning in the southern regions. Your demeanour is noble and dignified and soars like a solitary crane across the heavens. Your profound Virtue and great Talents are like the mountains bearing tortoises disporting in the sea that carry the universe.

We hold You in our ardent admiration and affection and feel indebted to you from the bottom of our hearts, humble merchants, that we are, who are as useless as the timber of the ailanthus tree and the chestnut-oak, and have often received Your Protection.

Every year we fit out ocean vessels to trade [at Ge-la-ba]. Every time You demonstrate Your Solicitude for us. Last year in the twelfth moon our company's vessel, the *Rong-Fa*, was on her way back. She could not reach her home port [Xiamen] and took shelter at Eastern Yue [Guangdong]. So, we have now fitted out a vessel, the *Shi-san-wan-sheng*, for a trading voyage to Ge-la-ba. We have appointed Xu Biaoguan to command the vessel. He is not yet knowledgeable in certain matters of trade. We fully hope You will afford him Your extraordinary attention, as if You were extending this to us; we pray that You will arrange for the accounts to be promptly paid, so that the ship can return on time.

We will then have been the recipients of Your unbounded profound Benevolence. As for the linen and other presents You have

²¹ *Plakaat* of 24 February, 1804. . . . "met de alhier aangekoomen Eymuysche jonk Inghoat (zijn) 998 Chineesche nieuwelingen alhier aangebragt".

²² *N.I. Plakaatboek*, vol. 7, p. 471.

²³ *N.I. Plakaatboek*, Vol. XIII, p. 488. The usual poll tax is forty *stuivers*.

²⁴ Albertus Henricus Wiese served as Governor-General from 15 June 1805 until 14 January 1808, when he was succeeded by Herman Willem Daendels.

given to us, as we enter them in our records, we feel deeply indebted to You.

Now, as this ship hoists sail, we have respectfully written this letter—we hope You will deign to cast Your eye upon the trifling presents that we are sending along as an expression of our sentiments towards You. We respectfully wish You peace and happiness. We pray You will peruse this letter.

Presents:

Black tribute satin, two bolts

Gold foil, two chests

purple cloth, two *geli* [c. 8.5 metres]

Xihe tea, two chests.

In 1805 what Li Kunhe had dreaded from the outset occurred: because the *Rong-Fa* had set sail late from Batavia, she encountered contrary winds on the home stretch and was not able to reach Xiamen. The above letter explains how another ship had to be fitted out as a replacement for the *Rong-Fa* on the Xiamen-Batavia route.

5. Letter of Jiaqing Year 11, 11th month [December 1806]

The Li Kunhe Ocean *Hang* of Xiamen humbly addresses a letter to Your Excellency, the Great, Wise Lord of Ge-[la-ba],

We believe respectfully that Ge-la-ba is a prosperous country, famous among the maritime countries. Its scenery is extraordinarily beautiful! People from far and near hold Your Country in respect. Trading ships ply the waters of his hub of sea and land transport. You are the Powerful Sovereign who protects the countries of the southern seas. You act in accordance with Your laws and regulations. Your Benevolence extends in the Orient to those from afar. We are bathed in Your Kindness; just like the sun, which sheds its radiance over the three mountains, Your Light leaves no place untouched.

Last year this humble company sent the *Shi-san-wan-sheng* to trade in Your Territory. This summer it returned to Canton [Guangzhou]. We have read Your letter. You have shown us great consideration and we have recorded the many presents You have bestowed on us. It is difficult to find words to express our feelings of gratitude.

At present our company in Xiamen is sending the *Rong-Fa* under the command of Huang Jiguan. We shall be sending the vessel [*Shih-san-]Wan-sheng* from Guangzhou under the command of Ma Huaguan. Both ships are heading for Ge-la-ba. Upon arrival they will receive Your Kindness and Patronage. [We trust] Your Excellency will order all those concerned to observe fair trading practices and ensure that the accounts are settled promptly, so that the ships can return at an early date. We rejoice in the abundance of Your Sentiments towards us. We are unable to repay Your Kindness as we set sail. We have prepared some worthless objects in order to express our sincere feelings and hope You will peruse our letter.

List of presents written on the envelope:

2 bolts of tribute satin
2 chests of gold foil
2 bolts of Chinese white linen
2 chests of Xihe scented tea.

6. Letter of Jiaqing Year 12, twelfth month [January 1808]

The Li Kunhe Ocean *Hang* of Xiamen respectfully addresses a letter to Your Highness, the Vice-Roy of Ge-la-ba.

We are convinced respectfully that Ge-la-ba is a prosperous country, famous among the maritime countries. Its scenery is extraordinarily beautiful. People from far and near look up to You with respect. Trading ships ply the waters of this hub of sea and land transport. You protect the countries of the southern seas; Your heroic vassals respect Your sovereign laws and regulations. Your benevolence extends to the Orient. Those from afar are bathed in Your Kindness. We know that like the sun, which sheds its radiance everywhere over the three mountains Your Light leaves no place untouched.

Last year our humble company fitted out two ships to trade with Your Country. This autumn one returned to Guangdong and the other to Xiamen. Because of the high prices being asked on merchandise [in Batavia], many business losses were incurred. This winter we are once again sending the *Shi-san-wan-sheng* to Your Country. The ship's master, Ma Huaguan, has already benefited from Your great Kindness. We merely hope You will continue to favour him and allow him to trade promptly so that he can leave on schedule.

As regards trade, we also hope that You will order Your Subjects to trade fairly at reasonable prices, so that the goods brought home can reap a small profit when they are sold. When the merchants hear about this they will eagerly flock to You. It will be even more proof of how great is Your Kindness in accommodating foreigners.

This year the person who issued the licence for Makassar told us that Your Country wants to use copper coinage. We had intended to send this to You, but this commodity is looked upon as a necessity in our country, and the authorities have always forbidden it to be exported. It is difficult to defy the law of the land. Our company has employed every possible means to try and purchase some, but if the customs officials were to hear about this, they would make serious efforts to prevent it. It is too difficult to export it; instead, in accordance with Your Order, we shall try to recruit craftsmen [to make copper coins] and send them to Your country to enter Your Service. We shall be grateful if You welcome them when they arrive.

We have received Your opulent Presents. We have recorded them all, one by one. Now, as this ship prepares to depart, we are sorry that we lack suitable gifts to reciprocate Your presents. We have prepared some trifling articles of four kinds. We offer them as a

paltry expression of our respect. While writing this letter our thoughts reach out to you. We pray You will peruse this letter carefully and we hope it brings You joy.

2 rolls of tribute satin

2 bolts of Chinese white linen

2 chests of gold foil

2 chests of Xihe scented tea.

The export of copper was traditionally forbidden by Chinese law. Yet Chinese copper coins (cash or *picis*) were in great demand in Southeast Asia. Because the Napoleonic Wars had brought the import of Japanese copper into Java to a sudden halt, the Batavian government had sought to replace the locally minted or moulded copper coins with Chinese *cash*.

The final letter from Li Kunhe is once again a very conventional one.

7. Letter of Jiaqing Year 13, eleventh month [January 1809]

The Li Kunhe Ocean Hang of Xiamen addresses a letter to the Viceroy of Ba[tavia].

Your Lordship,

Discipline and morality rule in China. The seven celestial bodies all appear in the sky. The falling leaves show the end of the year is approaching. The plum tree foretells the coming of spring. We presume that the mountains and rivers of Your Country are presenting a beautiful vista at this time, with their splendid and brilliant scenery. The Chinese and barbarian subjects and people respect Your abundant Virtue. We observe that under the benevolent influence of Your Generosity even the trees and grasses are blessed by Your Beneficence. No country can compare with Yours.

In mid-autumn we received Your letter and abundant gifts and the dispensation from offering presents to Your Subjects. This reveals even more Your policy of adhering to the same trading principles without any variation. You have indeed inherited the teachings of the sages!

We have the honour to inform You that our ship, the *Shi-san-wan-sheng*, had to seek shelter at Yangcheng [Guangzhou] because autumn was fast approaching, and we have lost a little capital.

Therefore, we are fitting out this vessel in Yuedong [Eastern Guangdong], still under the command of Ma Huaguan. Furthermore, we have

the *Rong-Fa* at Xiamen. Together they will sail for Your country. If their trade enjoys Your benevolent Patronage and they can return at an early date, then our company will as ever be the recipient of Your abundant Kindness and great Righteousness and we shall be filled with cheerfulness.

We are sending simple presents in order to express our sentiments towards You:

Dizhi cloth, altogether 5 *geli* [21 m.]

Tribute satin, 2 bolts

Chenxingzhou brand gilded paper, two chests

Xihe scented tea, two chests

We hope You will accept these items. With overwhelming gratitude, we humbly write this letter.

With this letter Li Kunhe's correspondence suddenly breaks off. The recently discovered portfolio of Chinese shipping correspondence from which these letters have been quoted covers only the period from 1790 to 1810. It is not known for how much longer Li Kunhe continued to send his ships to Batavia, but, judging from the fact that only one *yang-hang*, the He-he-cheng, remained in 1813, it cannot have been for long. Do these brief glimpses of a Chinese shipping link that connected Batavia and Xiamen for almost three hundred years contribute to a better understanding of the operations of the *Nanyang* network? Although they may not dramatically change our existing views, they do fill gaps in our knowledge about the conditions and context in which maritime trade was carried out and add a few more missing pieces to the jigsaw puzzle that the study of China's overseas trade presents to the historian. The Xiamen *hang* through their letters and the exchange of presents, maintained much closer contact with the Dutch authorities than was previously known. The presence of the European Companies was less alien a factor in the world view of the *hang* merchants than is often assumed. Li Kunhe's letters—and the letters from other merchants in the portfolio retrieved tally in this respect—address the Governor-General as an overseas ruler who guarantees peace and prosperity in the Archipelago by adhering to age-old regulations and laws on trade. What more could a Chinese merchant, looked down upon in his own country, wish for?

Chinese Settlements in Rural Southeast Asia: Unwritten Histories

Mary Somers Heidhues

Among historians, Southeast Asia's Overseas Chinese have never enjoyed much popularity. They are in many respects a "People without a History", having left behind no substantial deposit of experience and having failed to produce a school of historians to write their own history from an insider's perspective.¹

This quotation from Leonard Blussé's collection of studies of mestizo women and Chinese settlers in seventeenth-century Batavia certainly overstates the case, if we think of Liem Thian Joe's history of the Chinese in Semarang,² of the *huiguan* (Chinese association) histories, and of the historical sections of most studies of urban communities of Chinese, some written by Southeast Asian Chinese themselves. Jennifer Cushman's own work adds in various ways to our knowledge of the history of Chinese in Southeast Asia.

Blussé's assertion is nevertheless partly justified. In China, history meant history of the achievements of the dynasty and of prominent and exemplary individuals. In Southeast Asia, traditional histories often had a strong legitimating function. In a similar way, much of recent research on ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia is biased toward community leaders, men of wealth and property or, more rarely, those distinguished in education, writing, or public service. As a consequence, historical studies have treated revenue farmers who dealt in opium, gambling and alcohol, *Kapitan*, and temple-builders, memorialized in tombs and ancestral tablets.³ For the

¹ Leonard Blussé, *Strange Company: Chinese Settlers, Mestizo Women and the Dutch in VOC Batavia* (Dordrecht: Foris for KITLV, 1986), p. 49. Kent Mulliner and Lian The-Mulliner have drawn attention to this quotation.

² Liem Thian Joe, *Riwajat Semarang, 1416–1931* (Semarang: Boekhandel Ho Kim Yoe, 1933).

³ For opium and revenue farmers, see James R. Rush, *Opium to Java: Revenue Farming and Chinese Enterprise in Colonial Indonesia, 1860–1910* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press,

moment, *cukong*, industrialists, and financiers, and above all, conglomerates, seem to dominate the field.

The many biographies and autobiographies that have appeared in the past years seem to be replacing the community studies of earlier decades. Most deal, not merely with individuals, but with urban ones. Even Yen Ching-hwang's social history of the Chinese in Singapore and Malaya emphasizes urban organizations and urban leaders.⁴

This bias toward urban communities is as understandable as is that toward their leadership. Chinese in Southeast Asia as a rule are not a rural people. They are more urbanized than the indigenous populations; they live, typically, in cities and in towns, not on the land. Often, where they acquired agricultural land, as in the Philippines or southern Vietnam, they were landlords, not farmers. Other Chinese, who did reside in rural areas or small market centres, may have collected and traded in primary products, but as a rule they did not produce them.

Rural Chinese communities: unwritten histories

Attention to the more typical, urban-based communities of ethnic Chinese obscures the fact that there have been, and in some cases still are, significant rural, agricultural communities as well. Perhaps the quotation from Blussé best fits their situation: they have a past, but their history is not yet written. Has the approach to Chinese in Southeast Asia been too narrow?

First of all, significant numbers of ethnic Chinese live in rural Malaysia. Undeniably, there have been studies of them, those which focused on the "New Villages" of Malaysia,⁵ as well as the works of the geographer

1990); Carl A. Trocki, *Opium and Empire: Chinese Society in Colonial Singapore, 1800–1910* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); John G. Butcher, "The Demise of the Revenue Farm System in the Federated Malay States", *MAS* 17:3 (1983), pp. 387–412; and Jennifer W. Cushman, *Family and State: The Formation of a Sino-Thai Tin-Mining Dynasty, 1797–1932* (Singapore: OUP, 1991). On Kapitan, see for example Sharon A. Carstens, "From Myth to History: Yap Ah Loy and the Heroic Past of Chinese Malaysians", *JSEAS* 19:2 (September 1988), pp. 185–208. For temple-builders, Wolfgang Franke and Chen Tieh Fan, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Malaysia*, 3 vols. (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1983–87); Wolfgang Franke, Claudine Salmon and Anthony K.C. Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, Vol. 1: Sumatra. (Singapore: South Seas Society, 1988); and Claudine Salmon with Wolfgang Franke and Anthony K.C. Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, Vol. 2: Java. (Singapore: South Seas Society, forthcoming).

⁴ Yen Ching-hwang, *A Social History of the Chinese in Singapore and Malaya, 1800–1911* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1986).

⁵ From a historical point of view, Francis Loh Kok Wah, *Beyond the Tin Mines: Coolies, Squatters and New Villagers in the Kinta Valley, Malaysia, c. 1880–1980* (Singapore: OUP, 1988) and Sharon A. Carstens, "Pulai: Memories of a Gold Mining Settlement in Ulu Kelantan", *JMBRAS* 53:1 (June 1980), pp. 50–67. Other New Village studies include Judith Strauch, *Chinese Village Politics in the Malaysian State* (Cambridge: Harvard University

James Jackson, who dealt with both Malaysia and Indonesia.⁶ In 1970, 52.4 per cent of ethnic Chinese in West Malaysia lived in rural areas and towns of less than ten thousand population. Ten years later, the proportion of Chinese living in rural areas and small towns had fallen to 44 per cent. Nevertheless, Chinese, who were about half of the urban population of Peninsular Malaysia, made up 23 per cent of the rural population, in absolute numbers there were over one and one-half million rural Chinese.⁷ In East Malaysia, especially Sarawak, where Chinese are nearly 30 per cent of the total population, substantial, long-established agricultural settlements also exist.⁸

In Indonesia in 1930, at the time of the last census which counted Chinese as a separate group, there were four major concentrations of Chinese outside of Java: East Sumatra (around Medan), West Borneo or Kalimantan, Bangka-Belitung, and Riau (a province which includes the residency of Inderagiri on the island of Sumatra and Tanjungpinang Residency in the Riau Archipelago). Chinese were 11 per cent of the population in East Sumatra and in Riau, 14 per cent in West Kalimantan, and 44 per cent in the combined area of Bangka and Belitung (Bangka 47 per cent, Belitung 40 per cent, respectively). The total of ethnic Chinese in these areas numbered nearly one-half million in 1930. In all four regions, substantial numbers of Chinese were engaged in agriculture: ethnic Chinese were eight or nine per cent of the rural (with "rural" being defined as those living in settlements of less than eight thousand) population in East Sumatra and Riau, 14 per cent of the rural population in West Kalimantan, and fully 42 per cent of the rural population in Bangka-Belitung. Obviously, several thousand of these—at least sixty or seventy thousand—were immigrant labourers working in mines, plantations, and *panglong* (lumber camps), but the number is still surprisingly high to those who think of the Chinese as city people. In East Sumatra only 25 per cent of the ethnic Chinese were urban; in Riau, 34 per cent; in Bangka-Belitung

Press, 1981) and Lawrence K.L. Siaw, *Chinese Society in Rural Malaysia: A Local History of the Chinese in Titi, Jelebu* (Kuala Lumpur: OUP, 1983).

⁶ James C. Jackson, *Planters and Speculators: Chinese and European Agricultural Enterprise in Malaya, 1786–1921* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1968); "Mining in 18th Century Bangka: The Pre-European Exploitation of a 'Tin Island'", *Pacific Viewpoint* 10:2 (September 1969), pp. 28–54; and *Chinese in the West Borneo Goldfields: A Study in Cultural Geography* (Hull: University of Hull Occasional Papers in Geography, no. 15, 1970).

⁷ *Laporan Am Banci Penduduk Malaysia* (General Report, Population Census of Malaysia) 1970, Vol. 1 (Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, 1977), pp. 56, 66; *Laporan AM Banci Penduduk* (General Report of the Population Census) 1980, Vol. 1 (Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, 1983), pp. 20–22.

⁸ T'ien Ju-k'ang, *The Chinese of Sarawak: a Study of Social Structure* (London: London School of Economics, Monographs on Social Anthropology, 1953); Daniel Chew, *Chinese Pioneers on the Sarawak Frontier, 1841–1941* (Singapore: OUP, 1990).

and West Kalimantan, a mere 14 per cent. For all of Sumatra the proportion of Chinese in urban areas was 29 per cent. Comparable figures for Java show that Chinese made up less than 1 per cent of the rural population, with the exception of northwest Java, where they represented 3 per cent; the proportion of Chinese who lived in urban areas was 59 per cent in Java-Madura and varied regionally from a minimum of 47 per cent to over 75 per cent.⁹

The roots of these and similar settlements in Southeast Asia go back several generations. Chinese cultivated sugar in Banten in the seventeenth century, later becoming market gardeners around Batavia.¹⁰ Chinese agricultural plantations in Siam reached their peak between 1840 and 1880, producing rice, tobacco, pepper, sugar cane, *sirih* (betel), vegetables, and other crops, either for export or for sale to urban centres.¹¹

A special case is that of Mac Cuu (Mandarin: Mo Jiu), the seventeenth-century Hainanese who migrated to Cambodia, and whose principality, Hatien, controlled the coastline of modern Cambodia and much of southern Vietnam as well. When trade no longer prospered in the late eighteenth century, Mac's family and other Hainanese settlers turned to pepper cultivation, which persisted in the province of Kampot until the 1960s, if not to the present.¹²

This listing should be enough to show that sizeable groups of Chinese worked the soil in less developed rural areas of Southeast Asia during the last three centuries, often long before Europeans exerted influence in those areas. What is more, many of them are still there. In the interest of a more balanced history of Southeast Asia's Chinese, this paper will emphasize the story of rural settlements in Indonesia, especially in Kalimantan and Bangka-Belitung, but it will offer some generalizations about other settlements in Malaysia, as well.

⁹ Mary F. Somers, *Peranakan Chinese Politics in Indonesia* (dissertation, Cornell University, 1965), pp. 11, 33, based on statistics from the 1930 census, and W.J. Cator, *The Economic Position of the Chinese in the Netherlands Indies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1936).

¹⁰ Claude Guillot, Lukman Nurhakim, and Claudine Salmon, "Les sucriers chinois de Kelapadua, Banten, XVII^e siècle. Textes et vestiges", *Archipel* 39 (1990), pp. 139–58.

¹¹ G. William Skinner, *Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957), pp. 111–13.

¹² Émile Gaspardone, "Un Chinois des Mers du Sud: Le fondateur de Hàtiên", *Journal asiatique*, 240 (1952), pp. 363–85; William E. Willmott, "History and Sociology of the Chinese in Cambodia prior to the French Protectorate", *JSEAH* 7:1 (March 1966) pp. 15–38; and Nicholas Sellers, *The Princes of Hà-tiên (1682–1867): The Last of the Philosopher Princes and the Prelude to the French Conquest of Indochina* (Brussels: Thanh Long, 1983). Sellers mistakenly asserts that Mac Cuu was Hokkien (p. 60); in fact, he originated from Guangdong, Leizhou, a peninsula across from Hainan Island (Gaspardone, "Le fondateur de Hàtiên", p. 374). (I thank Claudine Salmon for making available this reference.)

Sources for history

One reason for the scarcity of histories of Chinese settlements in non-urban areas is that they are hardly documented. Where are the written sources for these as yet unwritten histories?

Indigenous sources appear to have taken little notice of these settlements, which were usually far from population concentrations and only superficially controlled by native rulers, even when conflicts arose. What they do tell us, however, is, for example, that the sultans made use of their contacts with Chinese traders at court to bring in Chinese labourers and open up rural areas—for instance, gambier cultivation in the Riau Archipelago in 1734–40.¹³ In a similar way, the sultans of Palembang and Sambas imported Chinese miners to Bangka and West Kalimantan in the eighteenth century, and, as will be seen, mining was at the beginning of many of today's rural settlements. Chinese pioneer leaders were frequently part of the court power structure (often traders, because the courts were engaged in trade) and, at the same time, in close touch with south-eastern China, so that they could arrange for transport of migrants when needed.

Still, relations with the courts were not always smooth: the *Carita Bangka* (tale of Bangka) relates the case of Un Asing, head of the Chinese tin mines and a technological innovator, who improved mining methods on Bangka, probably in the 1740s. The sultan of Palembang, who ruled Bangka and controlled the mines, caught him selling tin illicitly to passing *wangkang* (junks), but because Un, who was extremely wealthy, had so many friends at court, he was exiled and not executed for his misdeeds. Finally the sultan was forced to call Un back to Bangka to get the mines operating again.¹⁴ The *Syair Perang Cina di Monterado* (story of the Chinese war in Monterado), an indigenous account of the wars between the Dutch and Chinese gold miners in the mid-nineteenth century, sides with the ruler of Mempawah and the Dutch against the Chinese miners, who are painted in darkest colours.¹⁵

In the nineteenth century, Munshi Abdullah (an “indigenous” source, although his father came from India), travelling in Pahang in 1838, noted that miners from China were working gold or tin deposits there and also

¹³ Munir bin Ali, ed., *Tufhat Al-Nafis, Al-Marhum Raja Ali-Haji Riau*, Romanized (Singapore, 1965), cited in Carl A. Trocki, *Prince of Pirates: The Temenggongs and the Development of Johor and Singapore, 1784–1885* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1979), p. 18.

¹⁴ E.P. Wieringa, *Carita Bangka: Het verhaal van Bangka* (Leiden: Vakgroep Talen en Culturen van Zuidoost-Azië en Oceanië, Rijksuniversiteit Leiden, 1990), pp. 103–4, 106.

¹⁵ Arena Wati, *Syair Perang Cina di Monterado* (Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1989).

in Terengganu. In one settlement, all had taken local wives—Balinese or Malay women. Abdullah, more familiar with Chinese ways than most European travellers, noticed that the Pahang settlers were Hakkas, an important theme to be treated below.¹⁶ Perhaps other indigenous sources still hold tales of Chinese settlements.

Chinese sources

The only chronicle known of the history of an early—that is, pre-nineteenth century—rural settlement written in Chinese is that of the gold-mining Lanfang or Lanfong gold-mining kongsi (Mandarin, *lanfang gongsi*) of Mandor, West Kalimantan, which J.J.M. de Groot translated into Dutch in 1885.¹⁷

The text was composed by Yap Siong-yoen (Ye Xiangyun), the son-in-law of the last *kapitan* of this kongsi, probably in the 1880s. Yap lists the kongsi's leaders and their years of service from the kongsi's founding in 1777 to its dissolution in 1884, when the last leader died. He notes disputes with other kongsis (at least where they ended successfully for Lanfang), gives particular attention to the pioneering role of the founder-hero, Lo Fong Pak (Lo Fangbo), who left China for the gold lands in 1772 with a "hundred families" (*bai jia*, probably meaning a lot of men), and follows with the heroic deeds of his successors. Although the text shows the leading role of Hakkas in the settlement, and particularly the domination of Jiayingzhou or Meixian men, it has its drawbacks as an historical source. It is adulatory and, as another Dutch author, Schaank, has shown, not always reliable, passing for example over Lo Fong Pak's early defeats.¹⁸ What is more, it is unique. Other gold-mining settlements in the area, some older and larger than Lanfang, left no written accounts, probably because they were destroyed in wars with the Dutch in the 1850s and perhaps because, unlike Lanfang, whose leader served for life, they changed their leadership up to four times a year.¹⁹

¹⁶ Munshi Abdullah, *The Voyage of Abdullah (Pelayaran Abdullah), Being an Account of his Experiences on a Voyage from Singapore to Kelantan in A.D. 1838*, trans. A.E. Coope (Kuala Lumpur: OUP, 1967), pp. 10–11; Siaw, *Chinese Society*, p. 4.

¹⁷ J.J.M. Groot, *Het Kongsiwezen van Borneo: eene verhandeling over den grondslag en den aard der chineesche politieke vereenigingen in de koloniën* (The Hague: M. Nijhof, 1885). (Lanfang means "orchid fragrance", in the sense of brotherly harmony).

¹⁸ S.H. Schaank, "De kongsis van Montrado", *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land-en Volkenkunde* 5, 6 (1893), pp. 514–5, 519–20.

¹⁹ E.B. Kielstra, "Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van Borneo's Westerafdeeling", *Indische Gids* 1889–1893, here 1889, p. 2208. Kielstra's source is a *Memorie van Overgave* by Kroesen, dated 7 January 1858. In the Lanfang Kongsi, a successor was also not elected but more-or-less nominated by the outgoing headman.

More typically, the history of the settlement of Pulai, in Kelantan, West Malaysia—formerly also a gold-mining operation, now one engaged in subsistence agriculture—is nearly forgotten. Sharon Carstens, who assures us that the Pulai area was opened in the late eighteenth century, if not earlier, reconstructed historical details from villagers' recollections and a few comments of European travellers. In the late eighteenth century, however, one Chinese visitor did report the existence of Chinese miners from Guangdong in the Kelantan area. They had taken Siamese wives and otherwise adapted to local conditions.²⁰ There may be other, scattered, remarks in the reports of Chinese travellers, but they are probably very abbreviated.

Western sources on rural communities

Primarily, the search for descriptions of the settlements leads to Western sources, travellers' accounts and, after the beginning of the nineteenth century, colonial reports. Despite their drawbacks—up to the late nineteenth century there were no officials who understood Chinese—they offer some important insights. As a result, accounts are vague about many details. Above all, depending on the observer, Chinese settlers appear to be a positive—or a negative—phenomenon.

Repeatedly, travellers and officials who came upon these settlements were surprised at their dimensions. Yet colonial officials and other observers, too, often regarded these numbers of Chinese as intruders, taking a "what-are-they-doing-here-anyway"-attitude.

In 1803, a Dutch official looked into Chinese tin mining operations on Bangka. Like Abdullah, he too found a symbiosis with local people. Near the mines, small groups of Malays or indigenous Bangkanese settled, the men performing auxiliary tasks for the mines (clearing land, making charcoal), while the women sold clothing and snacks to the miners, obviously a basis for intermarriage, since no Chinese women were present.²¹

While the 1803 report offers little comment about the desirability of the Chinese settlement, the following recommendation of the Council of the Indies from 1853 on the situation in West Borneo, where Chinese were engaged in gold mining and farming, is typical of the "it's either us or them" approach of many colonial officials to Chinese settlers:

Since 1816, the presence in Borneo of two such incompatible kinds of culture as the Chinese and the Dutch has inevitably led to clashes, which were always detrimental to our authority. [In reality, the Dutch

²⁰ Carstens, "Pulai", p. 52; this passage is translated from the Chinese in Jennifer W. Cushman and A.C. Milner, "Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Chinese Accounts of the Malay Peninsula", *JMBRAS* 52: 1 (1979), p. 21.

²¹ Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia. Bangka 21. (Report of van den Bogaart, 1803).

had left the Chinese to themselves from 1825 to 1850 and there had been no clashes]. It is clear . . . that the numbers of Chinese established in that region [West Borneo] turn the struggle with them into a national war, intractable because it has lasted so long, so that it can only be brought to an end by forcing all of them, without exception, to leave the field of their present operations [*exploitatieën*, i.e. mining] and to require those who remain [in Borneo] to reside under the protection of our flag in Sambas and Pontianak. The land may thereby be depopulated, tribute and income from the revenue farms may not flow to us for some time thereafter, but a barren land, populated by lethargic [*zonder energie*] Dayaks, would still be easier to keep under Dutch authority than a land given over to Chinese living in anarchy, who never act in good faith.²²

De Groot may have been pleading against such attitudes when he wrote his study of kongsi thirty years later. He believed not only that the Chinese should be left in place, but that their peculiar institution, the kongsi, was potentially a means of governing them indirectly.

Although the Governor-General of the Indies did choose to force the Chinese of West Borneo into submission, in no way would he accept a barren, depopulated land with Chinese confined to those harbour towns that were under firm Dutch control; they remained in place.

That West Borneo would be barren without the Chinese of course reveals what they had been doing there: apart from mining, they had established a variety of agricultural activities and this, if nothing else, led other officials to see the presence of Chinese in a positive light. A military officer who left the area in 1856 wrote of the "splendid rice fields of Singkawang".²³ The road from there to Sedau ran for two hours (walking time) through a fertile plain with irrigated rice fields and vegetable gardens, fruit trees in abundance, and pineapples planted like shrubs along the road.²⁴ The Chinese Affairs Officer, van Sandick, argued at the beginning of this century,

Anyone who, as I did, had the privilege of working as an official in the Chinese districts [of West Borneo], will not have left the area without having formed the inner conviction that the Chinese are the backbone of the population. The welfare of the whole area depends on them. . . . born agriculturalists as they are, they have turned the wilderness into shimmering rice fields and swaying coconut palms.²⁵

²² Advies, Raad van Nederlandsch-Indië, 17 June 1853, No. XXIX, cited in Kielstra "Westerafdeeling", 1889, pp. 1378–79. Measures similar to those suggested here were actually implemented in 1967, see below.

²³ Kielstra, "Westerafdeeling", 1889, p. 2124.

²⁴ In 1991, Chinese farmers still worked the fields between Singkawang and Sedau, fifteen kilometres to the south, along the road to Pontianak.

²⁵ L.H.W. van Sandick, *Chineezers buiten China: Hunne beteekenis voor de ontwikkeling van Zuid-Oost-Azië, speciaal van Nederlandsch-Indië* (The Hague: M. van der Beek's Hofboekhandel, 1909), p. 313.

In these cases, the Chinese had invested in the soil and put down roots, but that was not always the case, as will be seen.

Chinese settlements: some generalizations

Chinese settlers in Southeast Asia thus seem to have been diligent miners and successful agriculturalists. The sources enable other generalizations about the nature of rural settlements founded in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Special connections between South China and Southeast Asia aided emigration. Chinese peasants needed a support system to be able to migrate to Southeast Asia. Whether they went into mining or agriculture, someone else, with an eye on the profits, organized their move for them.

Important attractions in Southeast Asia in the eighteenth century were gold and tin. Local rulers, in contact with officials of Chinese origin at their courts or at neighbouring centres, encouraged migration. The sultans of Palembang, for example, utilized officials called *tiko*, from the Chinese for elder brother (*dage*), a title common for headmen of secret societies. These men were court officials, gifted, it seems, with the ability to move in court circles.²⁶ In Palembang they were Muslims. Yet they had ample contacts in South China, perhaps through their brotherhoods or secret societies, to be able to pull in immigrant labor to work in the mines. Emigration, which was of course illegal in China, was in all probability organized by societies of one kind or another.²⁷

The importing of labourers was a great, in fact the greatest, expense involved in mining and export-crop production. Of course, emigrants were seldom in a position to pay for their trip, no more so in the eighteenth century than they were in the late nineteenth century, when European employers paid for coolie imports. Once recruited, early prospective miners or agriculturalists sailed in junks from South China to Southeast Asian ports, as is clear from Court's description of the system of recruitment for Bangka's tin mines in the eighteenth century:

Annually . . . a confidential and competent Chinese agent [went] by the junk returning from Palembang to China, to invite efficient and select men to adventure the emigration . . . The expences of their voyage and establishment was [sic] to be defrayed by the [mine

²⁶ Horsfield, writing in 1813, thought *tiko* meant "treasurer"; see Thomas Horsfield, "Report on the Island of Banka", *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* 2 (1848), pp. 819–20.

²⁷ Yen Ching-hwang, *Coolies and Mandarins: China's Protection of Overseas Chinese during the Late Ch'ing Period (1851–1911)* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1985), pp. 40–41.

administrator or money-lender], who was to be reimbursed from their first profits at the mines . . .²⁸

Perhaps the founders of the sugar plantations, mills, and distilleries of Kelapadua, Banten, of the seventeenth century²⁹ were also close associates of the sultan of Banten and organized production similarly, obtaining concessions from the ruler and importing labour. Unfortunately, little information is available about the organization of migration in this period.

Chinese labourers brought distinct advantages to the local economy. Bringing in workers from China meant more than alleviating labour shortages in thinly populated areas; there was a technological advantage as well. Thanks to their organization of immigrant labour and use of ingenious technical devices, the Chinese were able to mine more profitably, efficiently, continuously, and on a larger scale than natives. The sultans or other rulers, who expected to receive and market the metals or tax the produce, could increase their profits, they thought, with little effort. The coolie importer-financiers earned some money from holding shares in production, but their so-called "internal profits" (as the Dutch later called them) were probably greater: paying the coolies in non-convertible tin coins or scrip (as, for example, in Bangka and Borneo), they sold the workers opium and other supplies at inflated prices. Western observers³⁰ thought it was debt that kept the coolies from rebelling or deserting, but the "social cement" that was behind this loyalty also included opium and special forms of organization.

In addition to gaining from new technology and organization, indigenous rulers discovered that having a Chinese population meant being able to profit from that population. Nor was this logic lost on Dutch colonial officials at a later date. Immigration of Chinese to West Borneo had been forbidden by the Dutch after the upheavals of the 1850s. Toward the end of that decade, however, one official pointed out that one-tenth of the population (that is, the Chinese) was providing the only significant income of the entire Residency of Sambas: the opium farm and other, miscellaneous, revenue farms; a poll tax on all adult males; and the corvée. The only way to bring in more revenue and make it possible, for example, to pay native rulers a salary would be to admit more Chinese.³¹

²⁸ M.H. Court, *An Exposition of the Relations of the British Government with the Sultaun and State of Palembang* (London: Black, Kingsbury, Parbury and Allen, 1821), pp. 218–19.

²⁹ Guillot et al., "Les sucriers chinois", p. 145.

³⁰ For example, A. de la Fontaine (Resident of Bangka), Report. Algemeen Rijksarchief [ARA], den Haag, 2. Afdeling, Collectie Elout 57–121, unpagged; on opium and finance and on the gambier plantations around Singapore, compare Trocki, *Opium and Empire*, pp. 63–70.

³¹ *Memorie van Overgave*, Resident of Sambas 1856, 1858, cited in Kielstra, "Westeraf-deeling", 1890, pp. 1704, 1707, 2221ff.

Suspecting that these communities of foreigners might make trouble, the sultans strove to keep them dependent on rice. Local people did not produce a food surplus sufficient to feed mining workers, so imports were necessary. In Borneo, miners were specifically forbidden to plant rice in 1760.³² Nevertheless, they soon threatened to escape the control of the sultans by doing just that.

Agriculture was important, even to mining kongsis. Gardens, pigsties, and, sometimes, rice fields were part of an early mining kongsi: everyone understood that a miner worked on his stomach. A degree of self-sufficiency in food production prevented the sultan from blackmailing the miners or tided them over when the sultan's promised supplies failed to arrive. Farmers, like newcomers, were not voting members of kongsis, and were often second-generation immigrants, sons of local women. A kongsi devoted only to farming at one time threatened to monopolize food supplies in West Kalimantan until its attempt was subsequently defeated by more powerful mining kongsis in the 1770s.³³ Thereafter mining kongsis in the area maintained their own auxiliary agricultural populations.

Plantations with cash crops under Chinese management continued to grow in the nineteenth century. On Bangka, it was easy to integrate pepper farming with tin mining, using land that was part of mining concessions and employing underemployed coolies. Coolies who failed the health examinations for mine work could sometimes be hired cheaply by cash-crop producers.

During the nineteenth century, Chinese in some mining areas began to be smallholders or even subsistence farmers. Perhaps this was because the gold ran out, as in Pulai, Kelantan. In West Kalimantan in the late nineteenth century, after kongsis were disbanded and gold fields exhausted, possibilities of export crops—rubber, copra, pepper, gambier—opened.³⁴ In Bangka, one reason for the shift was that work in the mines was gruelling and unrewarding, while tending a small plot was less tedious and provided support for a family, too.³⁵ In both locations, local people soon followed the Chinese example in planting cash crops.

Chinese agricultural and mining enterprises took advantage of special kinds of organization that linked them to urban areas and to each other.

³² P.J. Veth, *Borneo's Wester-Afdeeling: geografisch, statistisch, historisch, voorafgegaan door eene algemeene schets des ganschen eilands*, 2 vols (Zaltbommel: Joh. Noman en Zoon, 1854), Vol. 1, pp. 298–99.

³³ Schaank, "De kongsis van Montrado", p. 520.

³⁴ Cator, *Economic Position of the Chinese*, pp. 138, 158–59.

³⁵ Mary F. Somers Heidhues, *Bangka Tin and Mentok Pepper: Chinese Settlement on an Indonesian Island* (Singapore: ISEAS, 1992), pp. 77, 147–149.

These organizations took a variety of forms; their common feature was ritual brotherhood. The kongsis, which can be seen as organized brotherhoods using many of the rituals and symbols of "secret societies", provided "cement" to replace family and clan ties in the *Nanyang* wilderness. These institutions have often been described as democratic associations of miners who chose their own officers and shared profits equally.³⁶ The smaller groups especially practised rotating leadership and equal shareholding. Coolies in debt for passage (so-called *sinkeh*, or "new guest", Mandarin *xinke*) were not, however, shareholders and, in general, the older and larger the kongsi, the more likely it was that shareholders were a minority and that many shareholders were not workers but rather shopowners and coolie importers.

Apparently, the rituals of sworn brotherhood, which were widely available to Chinese at home and in the *Nanyang*, helped provide the social cement to keep these settlements alive. Later, such brotherhoods, in the guise of "secret societies", were a means to organize revolt, but this was not, it now appears, their primary activity on the Southeast Asian frontier. There, they performed economic functions.³⁷

In an area of agricultural pioneering, the Riau Archipelago, the "head of the river (*kangchu*, Mandarin *gangzhu*)" opened the valley of the river, which was the communication route, either with his own funds or with the capital of Chinese in a nearby town or even in Singapore. He brought in coolies, determined a good site for a plantation, and asked the local sultan or ruler for a letter of concession covering a watershed along a river bank. Settling at the mouth of the river, where he could control incoming and outgoing produce, he sold supplies to his coolies or farmers and maintained the revenue farms—opium and gambling—which provided a major part of his income. The system is probably quite old—Chinese tombstones from the eighteenth century have been found on the islands.³⁸ In fact, the number of epigraphic remains from the eighteenth and early nineteenth century in and around Tanjungpinang confirms that Riau was an important Chinese settlement before Singapore was founded in 1819.

³⁶ Wong Tai Peng, "The Word Kongsi: A Note", *JMBRAS* 52: 1 (1979), pp. 102–5 and also his "The Origins of Chinese Kongsi with Special Reference to West Borneo" (MA thesis, Australian National University, 1977), on which Trocki, *Opium and Empire*, also draws.

³⁷ Mary Somers Heidhues, "Chinese Organizations in Nineteenth Century West Borneo and Bangka" in *Secret Societies Reconsidered*, David Ownby and Mary Somers Heidhues, ed. (Amronk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1993).

³⁸ Ng Chin-keong, *The Chinese in Riau: A Community on an Unstable and Restrictive Frontier* (Singapore: Nanyang University School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Research Project Series, 1976), pp. 15–16; Franke, Salmon and Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, Vol. 1, *Sumatra*, pp. 371–73.

In early Singapore and Johor, as Carl Trocki³⁹ has shown, in the nineteenth century the *kangchu* system worked in a similar manner to that of mining kongsis. It organized capital, imported labourers and tools, enabled use of simple machines, and provisioned the workers. It managed and disciplined the work force, by means of ritual brotherhood, and also through indebtedness. It took over rudimentary political organization, revenue collection, defence, and religious worship. Finally, it insured mutual help in the absence of lineages and extended families, which organized such functions in China.

The mining kongsis of West Kalimantan gradually coalesced into federations with many aspects of a state, or rather a "state within a state", an expression that colonial officials continually used when they saw how Chinese could organize so effectively. This reinforced the suspicions of many officials toward the Chinese, implying that, basically, they were undesirable intruders who threatened the colonial order.

Many miners and agriculturalists were Hakkas. In certain areas, Hakkas from the core area of Hakka migration, Jiayingzhou (also called Meixian) in Guangdong province, dominated absolutely: they controlled the Lanfang Kongsis in Mandor. Huizhou and Chaozhou Hakkas formed the Monterado Taykong (*dagang*) Kongsis.⁴⁰ Hakkas are often concealed behind other speech groups in colonial statistics: many of the miners or settlers officially listed as Chaozhou or even Cantonese or Guangxi were in fact Hakka. Hakkas made up over 70 per cent of the population of Belitung in 1930; most of these were from Jiayingzhou.⁴¹ In West Kalimantan, the area north of Pontianak, largely a farming area, is dominated by Hakkas, as are the adjacent parts of Sarawak. The city of Pontianak itself and areas south of it (which depend on trade and fishing) have a Chaozhou majority. In other parts of Southeast Asia, Hakkas have not had a monopoly of either mining or agricultural activities; they are, however, even today, strongly overrepresented in rural areas.

In both rural and urban areas economic roles were often distributed to different subethnic or "dialect" groups. Where Hokkiens entered agricultural areas, they usually acted as collectors and traders in agricultural products, not as producers. Hokkiens were city folk, asserted a major of the Chinese on Bangka in the 1880s.⁴² T'ien Ju-kang found in the 1940s that Sarawak's rubber production was in Hakka hands, while dealers were Hokkien.⁴³ On Bangka and Belitung today, Hakkas and Bangkanese grow

³⁹ Trocki, *Prince of Pirates*.

⁴⁰ Groot, *Kongsis van Borneo*, pp. 65f; Schaank, "De kongsis van Montrado", pp. 508-15.

⁴¹ Heidhues, *Bangka Tin and Mentok Pepper*, pp. 178-79.

⁴² Letter of Major Tjoeng A Tiam, in ARA, 2. Afdeling, 1886 Mailrapport 671.

⁴³ T'ien, *Chinese of Sarawak*.

the pepper, while Hokkiens trade in it. In Malaysia, a Chinese saying summarizes the specialization of dialect groups in pioneering, shopkeeping, or commerce: "Hakkas build a city; Cantonese prosper from the city; Teochius and Hokkiens control the city".⁴⁴

Chinese women had little role in pioneering before the twentieth century. Women seldom left China to join their menfolk, so local wives were taken—and put to work. Although some women did work with *dulang* (pans) in the mines (Malaysia, Bangka, Belitung), or even ran small shops (Monterado, Kalimantan), they often tended a small plot while the menfolk toiled in the mine. In Bangka, local-born children avoided going into mine work if at all possible. At the end of the nineteenth century, although the local-born made up at least half the Chinese population, they were only eleven per cent of all miners,⁴⁵ and this may be representative of trends elsewhere.

In Hakka settlements, at least, intermarriage was not a road to assimilation of the Chinese. Instead, native women and their offspring were integrated into the transplanted Hakka society of West Kalimantan, Bangka, or Kelantan, wearing Chinese clothes and speaking Hakka. Daughters might leave the Chinese community by adoption but probably not by marrying out. Munshi Abdullah mentions that local-born children of Chinese in Terengganu, although their elders spoke Malay well, preferred to speak Chinese.⁴⁶

Chinese as innovators

Chinese were major innovators in agriculture as well as in mining; this innovation took several forms.⁴⁷

In Kalimantan, Chinese introduced double-cropped wet rice and planted sugar in kongsis times, that is prior to 1850. Later they pioneered rubber production. Local people responded to the example of the Chinese and followed them in cultivating new market crops in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Chinese opened the way to cash-crop production for Dayaks, which protected them from some of the ill effects of the Great Depression.⁴⁸

In Bangka, something similar happened with pepper. Pepper cultivation

⁴⁴ Sharon A. Carstens, "Form and Content in Hakka Malaysian Culture", paper presented to Annual Meeting, Association for Asian Studies, April 1991, p. 23.

⁴⁵ Heidhues, *Bangka Tin and Mentok Pepper*, p. 85n.

⁴⁶ Abdullah, *The Voyage of Abdullah*, pp. 11, 24–25.

⁴⁷ The Chinese played a similar innovative role in California, as the work of Sucheng Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil: The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1860–1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) ably demonstrates.

⁴⁸ Cator, *Economic Position of the Chinese*, p. 180.

had been abandoned in Riau in the mid-nineteenth century when the plants were hit with so-called "yellow disease". Although some Dutch observers thought pepper might be a suitable crop for Bangka, it was in fact Chinese entrepreneurs who established the crop there after 1869. They integrated it with mining, as discussed above, by using plots on mine land and working them with rejected or unemployed coolies. Chinese cultivated the plants more intensively than native growers in South Sumatra, for example, "forcing" them to bear simultaneously, staking, fertilizing, and tending them carefully. These innovators opened the way for Chinese and then Bangkanese smallholders; pepper became a more important source of income for the local population than did tin. Before World War II, Bangka—which is a fairly small island—produced 80 per cent of the world's supply of white pepper and was second only to Lampung, South Sumatra, as a pepper producer in the Netherlands Indies.⁴⁹ A similar shift took place in Sarawak, when gold miners gradually left mining for pepper and gambier cultivation after 1870.⁵⁰

In areas around major cities, as noted above, or adjacent to plantations, as in East Sumatra, Chinese also pioneered in market gardening. This was often a field for the local-born or locally rooted.

This is not to say that Chinese activities were ecologically desirable. In the nineteenth century, Chinese were highly mobile and developed methods of exploitation that required only short-term occupation of the land but returned quick profits. (Rice production in Kalimantan was an exception.) Their mining methods denuded and overturned the soil, rendering it useless for cultivation. They tended to skim only the cream from the richest deposits. If mining or water supply posed problems, they abandoned the sites and moved on.⁵¹ Jackson aptly named these methods "shifting commercial agriculture".⁵² Gambier exhausted the soil and even today's pepper cultivation is problematic in terms of maintaining soil fertility. The Chinese in Riau, most of them gambier planters, were described in 1909 as a "floating" population, seeking only profit to take back to China and willing to exhaust the soil to do so: "Although good farmers in general, they have no heart for the soil, which does not belong to them and which they will leave as soon as possible. Like caterpillars, they denude the tree, not worrying about what may become of it".⁵³

This verdict was perhaps too harsh; although gambier cultivation dwindled and pepper also fell prey to disease, modern Riau has sizeable, stable Chinese agricultural settlements.

⁴⁹ Heidhues, *Bangka Tin and Mentok Pepper*, p. 149.

⁵⁰ Chew, *Sarawak Frontier*, pp. 43–47.

⁵¹ Jackson, "Mining in 18th Century Bangka", pp. 37–39.

⁵² Jackson, *Planters and Speculators*, p. 1.

⁵³ Sandick, *Chineezen buiten China*, pp. 22–23.

Colonial attitudes toward the Chinese as temporary residents

Frequently, the negative attitudes mentioned above determined colonial and post-colonial policy toward the Chinese in the region. The most intractable problem for agricultural communities has been the land question. In the past, Chinese had great difficulty getting land rights in mining areas because tin might be discovered anywhere and mining companies—state or private—wanted easy access to deposits. In plantation areas, first choice went to European enterprises. Native rights, especially extensive for shifting agriculture, had to be protected, officials believed, so Chinese were excluded from these reserved areas as well as from forest reserves. The answer was short-term leases or annually renewable “Temporary Occupation Licences” for market gardening in British Malaya and, in Bangka, short-term leases of up to twenty-five years.⁵⁴ In Kalimantan, however, where land was plentiful, rice growers actually had access to full titles for their land in 1934. In addition, fifty-year leases were available for commercial crop smallholders (in all, eighty-four thousand hectares) and long-term estate concessions were allotted to rubber growers (twenty-five thousand hectares).⁵⁵ On the other hand, as Loh Kok Wah has pointed out,⁵⁶ mining company authorities thought that keeping a community of workers on hand, even when they could not always be employed, was a good idea. Sometimes, therefore, they favoured extending short-term leases to Chinese; when these expired, land reverted to the state or to mining concessions and leaseholders became “squatters”.

Rural settlements today

Large numbers of Chinese in the mines and plantations of the region are a thing of the past; most agricultural settlements are declining, although some persist stubbornly. Rural Chinese continue to be of local importance in Malaysia and in some regions of Indonesia. In the Riau Archipelago in the 1970s, only 21 per cent of Chinese resided in towns as against 79 per cent in rural areas.⁵⁷ Bangka also still has substantial numbers of ethnic Chinese, including a small but rapidly declining proportion of aliens, who live outside the towns.

In other areas of Indonesia, however, Chinese are not holding out in rural areas. Chinese aliens, in particular, seem to have largely disappeared from the rural areas of East Sumatra and from the interior of Kalimantan

⁵⁴ Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, pp. 21–22; Heidhues, *Bangka Tin and Mentok Pepper*, pp. 100–101, 148–49.

⁵⁵ Cator, *Economic Position of the Chinese*, pp. 162–63.

⁵⁶ Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*.

⁵⁷ Ng, *The Chinese in Riau*, pp. 25–26. In the entire province of Riau, the ratio was 15 per cent urban Chinese to 85 per cent rural. These figures apply to alien Chinese, who were

since the mid-1960s. Nevertheless, in West Kalimantan, Chinese market gardeners who live near the coast still supply Pontianak and smaller towns with fresh vegetables and export fruit to the entire Archipelago.

The mobility that helped ethnic Chinese move into the interstices of the developing Southeast Asian economy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is giving them other perspectives today. Substantial shifts of population, both voluntary and involuntary, away from the rural areas can be documented for recent years. Many have "returned" to China, moved elsewhere in Indonesia, especially to Jakarta, or left for destinations in foreign countries. Bangka's Chinese, including miners, were 47 per cent of its population in 1930 (excluding miners, the figure was 32 per cent). In the early 1980s, the Chinese component was only about 25 per cent of Bangka's population. Similarly, the percentage of Chinese in the population of Riau-Tanjungpinang is declining, partly because of immigration of ethnic Indonesians from elsewhere in the country.⁵⁸ In West Kalimantan, although there are no official figures, the trend is similar.

Citizenship and land questions that relate to it (since aliens are often denied access to land) have been complicated by political struggles. The Malayan Emergency is said to have led to the resettlement of half a million "squatters", most of them Chinese, in the early 1950s. Not only was this a terrible dislocation; it made the Chinese more "urban". In Indonesia, the 1959 regulation called "PP-10" (*peraturan pemerintah*, or government regulation) forbade aliens to engage in retail trade outside major towns. Alien residence was then forbidden in West Java and a few other provinces. Rural—urban distribution of ethnic Chinese was further altered in 1966-67, when a ban prohibiting alien residence in rural areas was implemented in East Sumatra, West Kalimantan, and elsewhere, but not, apparently, in Bangka-Belitung or Riau (see above). These policies seem to reflect the old attitude which saw the Chinese as unwelcome intruders. In West Kalimantan alone thousands of Chinese—according to one report over fifty thousand and not necessarily aliens—had to live in detention camps and temporary quarters in Pontianak and Singkawang for months or years, under conditions of great hardship and loss of life, after they were expelled from the interior.⁵⁹ Apart from forced resettlement, however, there has been a voluntary movement away from the land to the cities, in both Indonesia and Malaysia, and this will surely continue in the future.

36 per cent of all Chinese resident in the province at that time, but the distribution of all Chinese was probably similar. Since the 1970s, the proportion of aliens has certainly declined because of a more generous policy of granting citizenship in Indonesia, as is discussed below.

⁵⁸ Heidhues, *Bangka Tin and Mentok Pepper*, p. 218; Ng, *The Chinese in Riau*, p. 24.

⁵⁹ For one account of the 1967 expulsions, see Herbert Feith, "Dayak Legacy", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 25 January 1968, pp. 134-35.

Access to land becomes less of an issue as agricultural communities decline. For rural Chinese in Indonesia who still want to hold land, a light at the end of the tunnel has been a decision to admit Chinese more freely to Indonesian citizenship. Since 1980, proof of citizenship is also more widely available to local-born ethnic Chinese. On the other hand, official Indonesian policy promotes assimilation and disparages expression of Chinese culture, except in a few carefully defined channels.⁶⁰

In Indonesia, rural Chinese are currently experiencing other disadvantages for reasons which have nothing to do with being Chinese. In general, the government has given little support to Outer Island export crop smallholders, compared to the help provided for farmers on Java or for plantation agriculture. Tin prices are low; rubber and pepper prices have been depressed. Fishermen in Bagan Siapiapi, Sumatra (province of Riau), once a major centre of the fishing industry, face declining catches because of pollution.⁶¹ None of these problems is specific to Chinese. A similar chain of causes for the reduction of the rural population could probably be found in Malaysia. There, policies in favour of *bumiputra* have helped farmers—large landholders much more than small ones—but seem to have skipped over the Chinese rural poor.⁶²

Written and unwritten histories

Why all this attention to Chinese in the Southeast Asian “boondocks”? For one thing, one might note, the presence of Chinese who are non-city dwellers and even farmers forces a rethinking of issues of majority-minority relations and of long-cherished concepts of plural societies in Southeast Asia. Not all ethnic Chinese can be classified as monopoly capitalists or even be accurately described as “middleman minorities”, to cite a phrase that is often used to explain their situation.⁶³ Charles Coppel has made the point that a significant number of Chinese are not even members of a trading minority. More attention to Chinese in non-business occupations might open a perspective for a review of attitudes toward Chinese minorities at the local level, possibly revealing less resentment of ethnic Chinese where they founded agricultural settlements than where they appeared as traders or middlemen.

⁶⁰ Although Chinese-language press and schools are forbidden, and community organizations are not recognized, freshly-renovated Chinese temples can be found in the cities and towns and in Pontianak there are numerous burial societies.

⁶¹ According to a recent visitor to the area.

⁶² Compare Loh, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, pp. 269–72.

⁶³ See Charles Hirschman, “Chinese Identities in Southeast Asia: Alternative Perspectives”, in *Changing Identities of the Southeast Asian Chinese since World War II*, Jennifer Cushman and Wang Gungwu, ed. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1988, pp. 23–31. The phrase is from Edna Bonacich.

Furthermore, histories in Southeast Asia usually have been written for the purpose of legitimation: of rulers, systems, societies, and in modern times even of revolutions and states. The fact that Chinese settlement in rural Southeast Asia has received little attention abroad and has been virtually ignored in national history affects the status of the ethnic Chinese themselves. The question "what-are-they-doing-here" is still posed and renders their situation precarious. Rural Chinese continue—certainly this is the case in Indonesia—to lack legitimacy. Chinese businessmen may have an accepted position as engines of economic development, but rural people, in Jakarta's eyes, hardly fill that role. Put differently, if Chinese in rural areas of Southeast Asia are still largely "a people without a history", this may affect their future, because it, too, calls into question the legitimacy of their presence.

Perhaps members of the communities themselves will write their histories, but up to now they have had little leisure for self-reflection. Most desirable would be an "embedded" history, integrating the history of the ethnic Chinese with that of the local societies. Furthermore, a written history should avoid putting people into "boxes" and remain open to seeing them in a variety of ways. While it is true that Chinese often interacted with local people as aliens, rivals, and moneylenders, they were also allies, patrons, neighbours, scapegoats, not to mention wife-takers (an important role in Southeast Asian societies) and, through adoption, daughter-givers. A study of their relations with indigenous peoples may show that those who allied with Chinese were able to retain power, prosper or simply persist. In this respect the relations between Chinese and Dayak in Kalimantan are of interest. The presence of Chinese settlements in Kalimantan affected relations between Malay rulers and Dayak subjects; did it perhaps help to retard the ongoing process of Islamization and Malayanization of the Dayak in that area?

In short, the history of ethnic Chinese rural communities should be regional history. Although these agricultural communities are diminishing, and, in the absence of immigration, their role will probably weaken further, it will be some time before they vanish. In view of their significance to these regions they inhabit, those who take up the task of writing their histories will meet important perspectives—and challenges.

Ancestral Halls, Funeral Associations, and Attempts at Resinicization in Nineteenth-Century Netherlands India

Claudine Salmon

The Confucian revival that took place at the end of the nineteenth century and the subsequent movement for reform in education, which led to the foundation of the *Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan*, or Chinese Association, in 1900 in Batavia, have generally been regarded as a watershed in the cultural history of the *peranakan* Chinese of the Dutch Indies. The aims of this association were mainly to reform the customs and beliefs of the Chinese in the Dutch Indies (especially as regards funerals and weddings) by relying on the precepts taught by Confucius, and to develop the knowledge and understanding of Chinese by founding a library, running modern schools, and propagating Confucian ideology. This movement, which coincided with a radical change in the economic status of the Chinese in the colony, has usually been considered as the first attempt to resinicize the *peranakan*.¹

However, it would be mistaken to assume that *peranakan* society had not undergone cultural changes prior to the turn of the twentieth century. Indeed, a process of acculturation or Islamization had been operating in various parts of the Archipelago over the centuries,² so that these *peranakan* societies were composed of two segments: a “visible” one that retained

¹ See Lea Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism: The Genesis of the Pan Chinese Movement in Indonesia (1900–1916)* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1960); Kwee Tek Hoay, “Atsal Moelanja Timboel Pergerakan Tionghoa jang Modern di Indonesia”, *Moestika Romans* 73–84 (1936–39), also published as Kwee Tek Hoay, *The Origins of the Modern Chinese Movement in Indonesia*, Translations Series, Modern Indonesia Project, trans. Lea Williams (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1969); Nio Joe-lan, *Riwajat 40 taon dari Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan–Batavia (1900–1939)* (Batavia: Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan, 1940).

² Denys Lombard and Claudine Salmon, “Islam et sinité”, *Archipel* 30 (1985), pp. 73–94.

traits of Chinese culture, and an "invisible" one that was in the process of merging into the local societies. I intend to show here that this acculturation process evoked the resentment of some *peranakan* circles, resulting in an earlier movement of resinicization that occurred by the mid-nineteenth century in certain cities of Java and in Makasar with the founding of collective temples for ancestor worship and of voluntary associations for the proper conduct of weddings and especially funerals.³ I have so far traced seven such collective ancestral temples, which were founded on the initiative of the heads of the local Chinese communities and aimed at maintaining or reviving traditional customs, as well as several funeral and, more rarely, marriage associations emanating either from a community or from one of its segments. The present state of knowledge of these aspects of the communal life of the Chinese in Indonesia does not yet allow the historical development of each to be traced. Some of them are known only by an advertisement in the press; some had been registered by the Dutch authorities and their statutes published in official records, but have since disappeared; others still have succeeded in surviving until now and continue to operate with new statutes, either in their original premises or in new buildings.

In order to get a better idea of this movement for the revival of Chinese customs, it will be helpful first to survey the development of these religious institutions before focusing on two of them: the Hokkien Kong Tik Soe, or "Temple of the Merits of Fujian", founded in 1864 in Surabaya, and its counterpart in Makasar, the Hokkien Kong Soe, or "Fujian Collective Ancestral Temple", founded in 1868. Each is comparatively well documented and instances the coupling of a collective ancestral temple with an association aimed at reviving Chinese culture and curbing the Islamization process. Finally, it will be useful to reflect on the significance of this earlier resinicization movement.

Collective ancestral temples and funeral and marriage associations: an historical survey

Very little research on the Chinese of the Dutch Indies has been carried out at a local level, so that the history of the various communities of Java and the Outer Islands has remained largely unexplored.⁴ It was not until

³ It may be of interest to recall here that a similar process took place in the mid-seventeenth century in Chendai (near Quanzhou, Fujian province) among the descendants of Muslims, who, having decided to abandon their Muslim faith, gradually changed their funerary customs, worshipped ancestral tablets, and eventually erected an ancestral temple. See Committee for the Research on the History of the Hui of Chendai, ed., *Chendai huizushi yanjiu* (Research on the History of the Hui of Chendai) (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1990).

⁴ See Liem Thian Joe, *Riwajat Semarang, 1416-1931* (Semarang: Ho Kim Yoe, 1933); Claudine Salmon and Denys Lombard, *Les Chinois de Jakarta: Temples et vie collective*,

a few colleagues and I started work on Chinese epigraphic materials in Indonesia that we were able to form an overview of their distribution in Java. We discovered that of the three provinces, Central Java is the richest as regards the quantity of inscriptions still in situ; this reflects to some extent the vital part played by the Chinese in the economic and social life of the interior Javanese states since the eighteenth century. It is followed by West Java, where the uneven distribution of inscriptions has to be related to the fact that for a long time the Chinese were not allowed to settle in the uplands without a special permit. The much smaller number of inscriptions collected in the province of East Java raises a problem. It could be that the assimilation process among the Chinese in this part of Java was operating on a broader scale. Surprisingly, some old cities like Tuban, Gresik, and Bojonegoro have very few epigraphic remains, not to mention Surabaya, where remarkably few, modest religious foundations remain as compared to those still extant in Jakarta and Semarang. We collected only 67 inscriptions in Surabaya as against 174 in Jakarta, 134 in Semarang, 64 in Cirebon, and about 100 in Makasar (which includes numerous tombstone inscriptions from the early twentieth century).⁵

After death every Chinese is supposed to be worshipped by someone, at least by descendants. In China the extent and frequency of this worship varied considerably amongst families and individuals. Ancestral temples were usually found in the countryside near the family home where all the neighbours might be relatives bearing the same surname. Among the Chinese living in Southeast Asia, only a few rich lineages have managed to erect ancestral temples. The majority of people have made do with a household worship revolving around the tablets of the recently deceased, which were placed on an altar within the family home and worshipped in order to preserve the memory of the dead, to serve their needs, and to satisfy the demands of their reduced authority. Worship of each tablet continued in this way for three or four generations, after which the tablet was removed and its place in household ritual came to an end.⁶ Another ritual, as important as the worship of the tablet, was that performed at

Études insulindiennes—archipel, no. 1 (Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1980); Wolfgang Franke, Claudine Salmon, and Anthony Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, Vol. 1, *Sumatra* and Vol. 2, *Java* (Singapore: South Seas Society, 1988; in press).

⁵ Franke, Salmon and Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, Vol. 2, *Java*. In big cities like Jakarta, Semarang, and Surabaya, urban development has brought about the removal or destruction of the Chinese cemeteries. In Makasar the cemeteries have been relocated again, so that the epigraphs W. Franke collected there in the early 1980s no longer exist.

⁶ When visiting the house of the So (Su), a family of long standing in Jakarta (Kota), we observed that the tablets kept there were not necessarily in a direct line, although they spanned more than five generations. In some other places, especially in Semarang, when

the grave on *qingming*, or Ancestral Memorial Day, shortly after the spring equinox.

In Java, the oldest extant ancestral halls (*zuci*, *zongci*, or *zumiao*) were built during the eighteenth century. We have so far traced only three: two in Jakarta and one in Semarang. Only one, the Chenshi Zumiao, or "Ancestral Temple of the Chen", is dated with certainty. Founded in Batavia in 1754, its front hall is dedicated to Chen Yuanguang (d. 711), the general who opened up the area of Zhangzhou (Fujian) during the Tang dynasty and who was later awarded the title of Kaizhang Shengwang, or "The Holy King who Opened Zhangzhou". The Tianhou Gong or "Temple of the Queen of Heaven", has a front hall dedicated to Tianhou, also known as Lin Moniang, while the rear hall is the ancestral temple of the Lin (or Lim in Hokkien). Its date of foundation is not known, but the first restorations we know of are dated 1784 and 1791.⁷ The third, the Zehai Miao, or "Temple for the Pacification of the Sea", in Semarang, has its front hall dedicated to Kwee Lak Kwa, or "Kwee the Sixth", a merchant who was attacked by pirates when travelling by sea to Tegal (Central Java) and reputedly escaped by vanishing into the air, after which he was locally deified.⁸ The shrine was founded about 1756 and used as an ancestral temple by the Kwee (Guo) family. Behind the ancestral tablets is a wooden board bearing the name of the first Chinese Captain of Semarang.

Most of the other extant ancestral temples date from the nineteenth century:

Jakarta: Chen, 1861; Lioe/Lauw, c. 1879; Go, 1887; Thio, 1893; Njoo/Liong, end of the nineteenth century;

Semarang: Tan, 1815; Lim, 1881;

Surabaya: Han, 1876; Tjoa, 1883; and The, 1883;

Makasar: Nio, 1854; Li, c. 1887; Thoeng, c. 1898; and Yo, end of the nineteenth century (?).

All these ancestral halls, except those of the Chen, Lioe/Lauw, Thio, and Njoo/Liong families, were established by people from Fujian province.⁹ Among these, some were founded by descendants of a single ancestor (such as those of Surabaya and the Nio temple in Makasar), while others,

the descendants do not want to continue household worship, they remove the tablets to the ancestral temple, or else to a nunnery or a Buddhist temple. The tablets worshipped within the family home and those placed in the ancestral hall are often difficult to distinguish.

⁷ Salmon and Lombard, *Les Chinois de Jakarta*, pp. 121–22.

⁸ Claudine Salmon, "Cults Peculiar to the Chinese of Java" in *Yazhou wenhua (Asian Culture)* (Singapore) 15 (1991), pp. 14–16.

⁹ The ancestral temples of the Chen, the Lioe/Lauw, and the Njoo/Liong were in effect founded by Hakka from Guangdong and Fujian. That of the Thio was established on the initiative of the famous entrepreneur and reformer, Thio Thiauw Siat or Zhang Bishi (1840–1916), a Hakka born in Dapu, Guangdong ("Statuten der vereeniging Thio Ke Soe" (Statutes

such as those of the Tan of Semarang and the Njoo/Liong in Jakarta, were founded by people bearing the same surname but not necessarily related. Only a close study of the tablets and of the genealogies may allow us to distinguish between these two categories.

In the early 1880s, De Groot noted that some of the ancestral halls in Java sheltered tablets belonging to different surnames.¹⁰ This is the case for the three temples in Surabaya in which several tablets of the deceased of the wives' families are also kept in a separate rear or side altar.¹¹ However, De Groot did not specify this kind of collective ancestral temple, known in Indonesia as *yici* ("public ancestral temple"), *gongci* ("collective ancestral temple"), or *gongde ci* ("temple of merits"),¹² which apparently can only be found within the Chinese diaspora. Very little attention has been paid to these institutions, and we have yet to find evidence of such temples in Sumatra or even in Singapore or Malaysia.¹³ These collective temples may well have been peculiar to Java and Makasar, where we have traced seven ancestral halls so far, five of which are associated with Hokkien

of the Ancestral Temple of the Thio Family), *Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië voor 1893*, no. 63. The same year the Thio also founded an association to run the family cemetery located in Tanjung Baru, Slipi (*ibid.*, p. 79, no. 165); see also Salmon and Lombard, *Les Chinois de Jakarta*, p. 170. For more detail about Thio Thiau Siat's political activities, see *inter alia* Michael R. Godley, *The Mandarin-Capitalists from Nanyang: Overseas Chinese Enterprise in the Modernization of China, 1893-1911* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), chap. 4.

¹⁰ J.J.M. de Groot, *Les fêtes annuellement célébrées à Emoui [Amoy]: Etude concernant la religion populaire des Chinois*, transl. E. Chavannes, *Annales du Musée Guimet* 11 (1886), p. 553: "Comme il arrive souvent que les Chinois de noms de famille différents soient établis dans une même localité et qu'ils y vivent mêlés, cela fait qu'on admet dans certains temples des ancêtres de toutes les tribus".

¹¹ For instance, at the back of the main altar in the ancestral temple of the Han stands the tablet of a member of the Chen family, who apparently was related to the Han by his daughter. Similarly, the temple of the Tjoa also shelters tablets of members of the Yap and Tan families, while in that of the The also stand tablets of the Lim.

¹² In the term *gongde ci*, the element *gongde* very likely alludes to the ceremonies of *gongde* that are intended specifically to benefit the person who has just died. These rituals, which are still performed in Taiwan, focus on the individual through the use of a paper figure representing the deceased. For more details, see Emily M. Ahern, *The Cult of the Dead in a Chinese Village* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1973), pp. 122-25.

¹³ This assertion is based on a study of the following three books: Chen Ching-Ho and Tan Yeok Seong, ed., *Xinjiapo huawen beiming jilu: A Collection of Chinese Inscriptions in Singapore* (Hong Kong: Xianggang zhongwen daxue, 1977); Wolfgang Franke and Chen Tieh Fan, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Malaysia*, 3 vols. (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1982-87); Franke, Salmon and Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, Vol. 1, *Sumatra*. However, ancestral tablets are still to be found in some temples such as the Qingyun Ting in Melaka, which, probably established in 1673, contains the tablets of former community leaders; the Guangfu Gong in Penang, established in 1800; and the Hengshan Ting in Singapore, established in 1830.

circles and two with people from Guangdong province. As for their funeral and marriage associations, they definitely have their origins in China.¹⁴

Hokkien Collective Ancestral Halls

The Yici in Cirebon is the oldest of the five Hokkien collective ancestral halls, founded in 1790 on the initiative of the Captain of the time, Tan Oat Ing (Chen Yueying, from Longxi county, Zhangzhou, Fujian) in the premises of the Chaojue Si, or "Flow of Enlightenment Temple". Although very little is known about it, one may assume that its founding was linked with the increasing number of Chinese Muslim converts who played a significant part in the management of the principality.¹⁵ According to a stone inscription commemorating the repair of the Chaojue Si and the construction of the ancestral hall (here called Wanshan Tang, or "Hall of the Ten Thousand Virtues"), the hall was designed to shelter the tablets of the monks who had worked and died in the temple as well as those of other local personalities.¹⁶ In 1848 it was reconstructed in Jalan Talang and renamed the Yici "Collective Ancestral Temple". This relocation was initiated by Tan Phanlong (Chen Panlang, captain 1836–46) with the help of his successor, Khoe Tiauw Jang (Qiu Chaoyang, captain from 1846), Tan Tiang Keng (Chen Changgeng, Chinese lieutenant from 1846), and the administrator of the Giesoeh (Yici) according to the commemorative inscription dated 1848. It also records that the Chinese leaders running the temple were able to purchase several houses, the proceeds from which were used to finance religious ceremonies. The temple also contains an inscription from 1907, which recounts the history of the

¹⁴ See *inter alia* Rev. William C. Milne, *La vie réelle en Chine*, transl. André Tasset, ed. M.G. Pauthier (Paris: Hachette, 1858), pp. 69–70, which depicts benevolent associations for the purchase of coffins for the very poor and for the corpses of respectable strangers; and Rev. Justus Doolittle, *Social Life of the Chinese, with Some Account of their Religious, Governmental, Educational, and Business Customs and Opinions* (1895; reprint, Singapore: Graham Brash, 1986, Vol. 2, pp. 177–79), which provides an overview of marriage and funeral associations.

¹⁵ That the Chaojue Si was already in existence in 1712 is attested to by the fact that Tan Siangko, *syahbandar* and *kapitan* of Cirebon between 1705 and 1720, planned to build a defensive stone wall around it; the VOC, however, did not allow him to do so (Mason C. Hoadley, "The Making of a Minority in Indonesia: Chinese, Peranakan and Javanese Elites at Cirebon" in Magnus Mörner and Thommy Svensson, eds, *Classes, Strata and Elites: Essays on Social Stratification in Nordic and Third World History*, Report from the Department of History, Gothenburg University, no. 34 [Gothenburg: Nils-Goran Nilsson, 1988], p. 246). This plan points to the temple as a centre of Chinese, if not *peranakan* Chinese, community life. The political insecurity of the following decades and eventually the Islamization of the Chinese may explain why no restoration of the temple was undertaken until 1790.

¹⁶ Another tablet, also dated 1790, records in detail the amount of contributions and expenses for the restoration and festivities and the cost of tablets for the collective ancestral hall.

founding of the successive collective cemeteries run by the heads of the community. Moreover, the hall still shelters a wooden panel, donated by Captain Tan Oat Ing and presumably removed from the Chaojue Si after completion of the new edifice in 1848. The panel alludes to the founding of the first hall in 1790, referred to, unusually, as Liyi Tang, or "Hall for Rites", which has a Confucian connotation, in contrast to the Buddhist overtones of the term Wanshan Tang, by which it was also known. Among the tablets still kept in the hall is that of Tan Sam Tjaij (Chen Sancai), or Tumanggung Arya Wira Chula, who had abandoned his Muslim faith.¹⁷ Since 1898, this ancestral hall as well as the two other temples in the city (Chaojue Si and Wenshan Tang) have been run by a foundation called Kong Djoe Kwan, or "Association for the Glory of the Deceased", which had the aim of collecting money to maintain the temples and the cemeteries and to sponsor festivals for the dead.¹⁸

The second Hokkien collective ancestral is the Kong Tik Soe (Gongde Ci), or "Temple of Merits", in Semarang. Founded in 1845 on the initiative of two leading figures of Semarang, Major Tan Hong Yan and Honorary Major Be Ing Tjioe (1803–57), it is located to the left of the Dajue Si, or "Temple of the Great Enlightenment", in Gang Lombok). According to the commemorative stone inscriptions erected in 1845 and 1858, it was devoted to the worship of the tablets of deceased persons with no distinction as to surname. The main hall was dedicated to the tablets of the donors of large contributions, whereas the side altars were for persons with no heirs. The temple also ran a free school (*yishu*). In addition, the temple was intended to give shelter to travellers in distress and to widowers, widows, and orphans. Moreover, the Gongguan, or "Chinese Council", the headquarters of the Chinese officers appointed by the Dutch, was located on the premises of the Kong Tik Soe. Later on, during the time of Major Be Biau Tjoan,¹⁹ the Kong Tik Soe was run by a foundation, the Tjie Lam Tjay, or "Guidance Office", which in 1872

¹⁷ According to a stone inscription erected to commemorate the third repair of Tan Sam Tjaij's tomb, located in the private cemetery of Sukalila in the centre of the city, he died in 1739 (Franke, Salmon and Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, Vol. 2, *Java*). For a different version of the career of Tan Sam Tjaij, see H.J. Graaf and Th.G.Th. Pigeaud, trans., *Chinese Muslims in Java in the 15th and 16th Centuries: The Malay Annals of Semarang and Cerbon*, ed. M.C. Ricklefs, Monash Papers on Southeast Asia, no. 12 (Melbourne: Monash University, 1984), pp. 43–44.

¹⁸ From 1927 onwards, however, religious ceremonies for the dead were supervised by a funeral association called Hok Siu Hwe, or "Association for Happiness and Longevity", according to modifications of the original rules. Unlike the Kong Tik Soe of Semarang (see below), the amount paid to have one's tablet placed in the ancestral hall was the same for everybody (*Statuten dan Huishoudelijk-Reglement dari perhimpunan Kong Djoe Kwan Cheribon* [Cirebon: Drukk. "Tiong Hoa", 1927]).

¹⁹ Be Biau Tjoan, the son of Be Ing Tjioe, was born in 1826. He was awarded the title of honorary captain in 1853 and that of honorary major in 1862; he died in 1904. Be

took responsibility for supervising the temples and religious affairs and managing the cemeteries, with power to accept or reject tablets of the deceased.²⁰

The Collective Ancestral Temple in Rembang was founded on the premises of the Fude Miao, or "Temple of Happiness and Virtue", a small shrine dedicated to Fude Zhengshen. The altar where the ancestral tablets are displayed contains a wooden inscription dated 1856.

The Hokkien Kong Tik Soe in Surabaya was founded in 1864 on the initiative of Captain The Boen Hie (1816–89) and his brother and Honorary Captain, The Boen Ke (1820–99), with the aim of reviving traditional Chinese customs, especially for funerals and marriages. Subscriptions were first collected among local merchants in 1862; two years later the statutes of the Hokkien Kong Tik Soe, written in Dutch, were deposited in a notary's office in Surabaya,²¹ and the rules of the institution, in Chinese, allegedly engraved in the ancestral hall located in Jalan Bibis.²² The object of the ancestral temple and of the benevolent association attached to it was, and still is, to supervise Chinese observances and ensure that no Chinese, however poor, be buried without a proper tribute of respect. It

Ing Tjioe (style Shunmei, or Soen Bie), who like Tan Hong Yan, became exceedingly rich by running an opium farm, was among the founders of the two oldest private Chinese schools in Singapore, respectively completed in 1861 and 1867 (Liem Thian Joe, *Riwayat Semarang*, pp. 86, 98, 91, 100, 102, 104, 126; C. Salmon, "A Critical View of the Opium Farmers as Reflected in a *Syair* by Boen Sing Hoo, Semarang, 1889" in *The Role of the Indonesian Chinese in Shaping Modern Indonesian Life*, Proceedings of the Symposium held at Cornell University in Conjunction with the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute July 13–15, 1990, *Indonesia* (1991), p. 33; Chen and Tan, *Xinjiapo huawen beiming jilu*, pp. 284, 293).

²⁰ Liem, *Riwayat Semarang*, pp. 104–106. The Gongguan was abolished in 1931, along with the institution of Dutch-appointed Chinese officers, but the Tjie Lam Tjay still exists.

²¹ These statutes as well as the modified ones of 1884 and 1981 are still available; I owe a copy of them to Mr Oe Siang Djie, whom I wish to thank here. They are as follows: No. 17. Contract uit het Register der Besluiten van den G.G. van Nederlandsch-Indië, Batavia, 28e Mei 1863"; [title illegible] (copy of the Statutes of the Hokkien Kong Tik Soe registered by Thomas Amre Klinkhamer, Notary of Surabaya, in 1864); "Afschrift wijziging statuten van het liefdadig fonds Hok Kian Kong Tik Soe dd 30 December 1884, no. 90, Kantor van J.H. Hartevelt, Notaris te Soerabaija"; "Anggaran dasar yayasan 'Mulia Dharma' d/h Hok Kian Kong Tik Soe Surabaya", 1981.

²² They were published and translated into Dutch by Schlegel in 1885 (G. Schlegel, *Chineesche Begraffenis-en Huwelijksonderneming [gevestigd te Soerabaya]* [offprint from *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië*, 4th series, 8 (1885)]). Unfortunately, the author does not clearly indicate whether these rules were in fact engraved in the ancestral hall as had been planned by the committee. Since 1965 the building has been occupied by the Army and the furnishings of the temple, including the ancestral tablets, have been moved next door, to a modern house owned by the foundation. Although so far we have not yet been granted permission to enter the previous premises of the Hokkien Kong Tik Soe, an article published in 1937 clearly refers to a stone inscription placed inside the hall ("Perkoempoelan Tionghoa jang paling kaja dan toea di Soerabaja", *Weekly Sin Po* (Xin Bao), 9 Jan. 1937, pp. 22–23).

was also aimed at providing facilities for the celebration of showy weddings. More than one hundred donors contributed money for the construction of a collective temple. The association, which flourished very quickly, also purchased a plot of land (in Kupang, south of the city) where it established a cemetery in which shares were sold.

The last of the five Hokkien ancestral halls, the Hokkien Kong Soe, or "Fujian Ancestral Hall", in Makasar, also called Ing Sek Tong, or "Hall of Eternity in Makasar", was founded in 1868 on the initiative of Li Qingyuan and Nio Tek Hoe (or Liang Defu, style Yuyu, captain 1864–79?). Both belonged to wealthy families of long standing in Makasar.²³ The hall was restored in 1890–91 by Lie Lean Hie (Li Lianxi, 1862–1929), owner of the firm Eng Goan and eldest grandson of Li Qingyuan,²⁴ together with Dai Houyi (or The Tjing Hok? captain 1887–93) and some noteworthy members of the Tang (Thoeng) and Yang (Yo) families such as Tang Heqing (or Thoeng Tjam, 1845–1910), and Tang Longfei (Thoeng Liong Hoei, 1872–1942), who were appointed captains respectively in 1893 and 1908,²⁵ and Yang Huaiyu, who was lieutenant. The stone inscription set up by Captain Dai Houyi to commemorate the repair briefly relates the history of its founding. Of interest is the fact that two women figure among the main donors: Mrs Li, née Dai Ruilan, and Mrs Liang, née Li Yuzhu, who were related to the trustees of the ancestral hall.

Cantonese Ancestral halls

The Bacheng Yici, or "Collective Ancestral Temple of Batavia", has remained the only collective temple in Jakarta. It was founded for the benefit of the Hakka community. A stone inscription dated 1881 recounts its history.²⁶ For unknown reasons an earlier temple, erected in the area

²³ Li Qingyuan and Captain Nio Tek Hoe, a fifth-generation *peranakan* whose grandfather, Nio Phanlong (1731–84), was converted to Islam, also contributed to the repair of the Tianhou Gong in 1867. According to Heather Sutherland, "Nio Phanlong had been farmer of the market in 1764 and 1765, and had even been able to hold the import and export dues monopoly for 1765, in which he invested 12,000 rijksdaalders, so it is fair to assume he was a relatively rich man" ("Eastern Emporium and Company Town: Trade and Society in Eighteenth Century Makasar" in Frank Broeze, ed., *Brides of the Sea: Port Cities of Asia from the 16th–20th Centuries* [Sydney: New South Wales University Press, 1989], p. 119).

²⁴ According to an obituary note published in the monthly *Berita Baroe* of June 1929, Lie Lean Hie's father, Lie Ang Djian, had been Captain of the Chinese of Makasar (in office 1879–87). Lie Lean Hie was also a strong supporter of Chinese education (Panecea, "Kakaloetannja onderwijs Tionghoa jang bisa dilihat dari nasibnja Chung Hua Hsio Hsiao Makasar", *Panorama*, 30 March 1930, pp. 1605–07).

²⁵ Tang Heqing and Tang Longfei were among the donors who subscribed for repairs to the Changtai Miao in Singapore, especially in 1895 and 1916. Tang Longfei was one of the trustees of the temple in 1916 (Chen and Tan, *Xinjiapo huawen beiming jilu*, p. 144).

²⁶ For a translation of the inscription in French, see Salmon and Lombard, *Les Chinois de Jakarta*, pp. 165–66.

of Senin in 1865, was regarded as inadequate and a building fund was started for the present edifice, completed in 1878. To encourage donations, special tablets bearing the names of the donors and the amounts subscribed were prepared and later given the place of honour in the shrine. Income from temple-owned property was used for various religious ceremonies. In 1905, the temple founded a school. In 1928, the association running the temple renewed its statutes, and in 1931 the temple was given the name of Keshu Zongyici, or "Collective Ancestral Temple of the Hakka".

The early history of the Guangdong Gongci in Surabaya, and of its pioneer founders, is rather obscure. According to manuscript records in Chinese, settlers from Guangdong province founded the Guangdong Gongci, or "Collective Ancestral Temple for the Cantonese", in 1856. However, its statutes were registered only in 1893.²⁷ Like the Hokkien Kong Tik Soe, this association established a cemetery in Kupang, south of Surabaya. In 1874, as a result of a feud that erupted in Guangdong between Hakka and Cantonese, the two communities based in Surabaya parted company. The Hakka inherited the headquarters of the Guangdong Gongci, changing its name to Huichaojia Huiguan, or "Association of the People from Huizhou, Chaozhou, and Jiaying". At present the headquarters of the hall display only collective ancestral tablets, apart from a single panel expressing the wish to hand a good reputation down to all generations, dated 1856 and donated by Zhan Lunjun, Chinese captain in Timor (presumably Captain Tjam Sie, in office 1848–59).

Funeral Associations

In addition to those funeral associations composed of heads of Chinese communities responsible for managing collective ancestral temples, others were initiated by ordinary people. Like their counterparts in China, they were aimed at providing proper funerals. They usually emanated from the poor of a neighbourhood for the purpose of having money available for use when parents died. In the 1860s they were already numerous in Java; although their origins are not known, they were quite often linked with secret societies. The oldest we have encountered in Surabaya was the Gie Khie, or "Spirit of Justice", which was already in existence in 1865, although it was not registered until 1877.²⁸ Its founder, a certain Kho Tian Hok, apparently very much opposed to the committee that managed the Hokkien Kong Tik Soe,²⁹ managed to attract several hundred subscribers. When

²⁷ *Javasche Courant*, no. 23, 21 March, 1893. According to these statutes, the membership was restricted to relatives of the founding members in 1893.

²⁸ *Bintang Timoor*, 30 Sept. 1865; *Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië voor 1877*, no. 69; *Javasche Courant*, no. 25, 27 March 1877, which publishes its statutes.

²⁹ See a reply by Lieutenant Han Tjoei Wan (1815–95, in office 1854–74) to Kho Tian Hok, which appeared in *Bintang Timoor*, 4 Nov. 1865.

a member died, the others were expected to contribute one *rupia* each; if they were not in a position to pay, they had to accompany the coffin to the graveyard.³⁰ Similar associations appeared in Surabaya in the following years, such as Gie Hoo, or "Righteousness and Harmony", later renamed Kong Gie Siang and finally Hoo Hap, or "Harmonious Union" (allegedly founded in 1876 and registered in 1909); Po Gie, or "Retribution for Righteousness" (registered in 1886); and Tik Gie, or "Virtue and Righteousness" (registered in 1893).³¹

Chinese Culture in Conflict with Islam?

When the Chinese traveller, Wang Dahai (Ong-Tae-Hae), arrived in Java at the end of the eighteenth century, he was struck by the sight of those of his countrymen who had become assimilated:

When the Chinese remain abroad for several generations, without returning to their native land, they frequently cut themselves off from the instructions of the sages; in language, food and dress they imitate the natives, and studying foreign books, they do not scruple to become Javanese, when they call themselves Islam. They then refuse to eat pork, and adopt altogether native customs.³²

This process of Islamization had been accelerated after the repression of the Chinese in 1740, with many Chinese posing as Muslims to escape persecution. The Dutch authorities took measures to limit such conversions,³³ which had the twofold disadvantage for Batavia of reducing the population liable to the poll tax and facilitating the fusion of the Chinese and native populations. Chinese converts took on Muslim-sounding names. In 1766 the heads of the Chinese community in Batavia also tried to discourage conversion by prohibiting marriages between Chinese and Chinese Muslim converts, on the pretext that the adoption of another

³⁰ The Chinese were very keen to provide a "respectable" funeral for their relatives, with a large funeral cortege following the coffin (*Bintang Timoor*, 30 Sept. 1865).

³¹ Such associations also appeared in other cities such as Besuki (*Bintang Timoor*, 17 Nov. 1869). On Gie Hoo, see *Javasche Courant*, 12 Sept. 1909 and 3 July 1916; on Po Gie, see *Javasche Courant*, 24 Aug. 1886 and 21 Dec. 1888; on Tik Gie, see *Javasche Courant*, 21 Nov. 1893. These statutes are particularly interesting for their detailed prescriptions for funerals.

³² Ong-Tae-Hae, *The Chinaman Abroad; or A Desultory Account of the Malayan Archipelago, Particularly of Java*, trans. W.J. Medhurst (Shanghai: Mission Press, 1849), p. 33.

³³ In 1742 all "false" Chinese converts were ordered by the Dutch East India Company to undergo a check by a surgeon (J.A. van der Chijs, ed., *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek, 1602-1811*, 17 vols [Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1885-1900], Vol. 4, p. 580, 22 Oct. 1742); in 1745 they were forbidden to mix with Muslims and required to pay the poll tax (*Plakaatboek*, Vol. 5, p. 315, 21 Dec. 1745). In 1759 they were required to be in possession of a *cap*, or seal, stating that they no longer belonged to the Chinese nation (*Plakaatboek*, Vol. 7, p. 153, 8 Dec. 1755).

religion was punished by death in China.³⁴ Nevertheless, the Dutch did by 1770 recognize the category of Chinese Muslims by appointing a captain to superintend the Chinese *peranakan* of Batavia.³⁵

At the beginning of the nineteenth century numerous cities in Java and Madura, as well as Makasar, still had a district called *kampung peranakan* under the control of a *kapitan peranakan*. A Dutch civil servant who was in Semarang in around 1812 provides some information on the Muslim *peranakan* community, which apparently had become badly impoverished compared to its counterpart in Surabaya.³⁶ In the 1830s, after the Dutch had recovered from the Java War, the offices of captain of the Chinese Muslims were gradually abolished.³⁷ The population was then administered according to district of residence rather than ethnic origin. However, in the 1850s a considerable number of *peranakan* were converted to Islam and lived under a distinct head (lieutenant *peranakan*), especially in Makasar, where the first lieutenant was apparently appointed in 1852,³⁸ and Sumenep (Madura). It is generally taken for granted that later on these *peranakan* became completely assimilated with the local popula-

³⁴ *Plakaatboek*, Vol. 8, p. 142, 25 July 1766. The Company, however, refused to give open support to the ban by Chinese officers, provided these conversions did not disturb the social order.

³⁵ The fact is confirmed by Wang Dahai (Ong-Tae-Hae), who states: "Having multiplied, in the course of time, the Dutch have given them into the hands of a Captain, who superintends this class" (Ong-Tae-Hae, *Chinaman Abroad*, p. 33).

In 1785 the captain in charge of the *peranakan* of Batavia and his subordinates apparently made an official request for permission to build a mosque for their own use. The Company agreed and the mosque, which is well known in Jakarta today under the name of Mesjid Krukut, was built on a piece of land belonging to the captain (*Plakaatboek*, Vol. 10, pp. 778–80, 14 June 1785).

The first office of *kapitan peranakan* was instituted by the Cirebon princes in 1730 for administrative reasons (Mason Hoadley, "Javanese, Peranakan, and Chinese Elites in Cirebon: Changing Ethnic Boundaries", *JAS* 47: 3 [August 1988], pp. 513–14).

³⁶ Johan Knops, a Dutchman who had arrived in Semarang in 1784 and a member, along with Lieutenant Colonel Colin Mackenzie, of the Committee on the State and Amelioration of Java (1812–13), reported to Stamford Raffles in around 1812: "As the Parnakkangs have become Mohammedanis or are by birth, they live more in the style of the country than in the Chinese way. Their job is generally fishing and the navy, hiring themselves out as sailors or skippers of entire vessels . . . They are whiter than normal to be Javanese but not as white as the Chinese. They marry Javanese women; this results in mixed blood which becomes less so from generation to generation" (report by Johan Knops on Semarang, Unbound Translations, Class. 14, 32, Mackenzie Collection, India Office, London). A report by J.A. van Middelkoop (Private 6, p. 211, Mackenzie Collection) alludes to the Muslim *peranakan* in Surabaya, who for the most part were engaged in trade and by no means wealthy.

³⁷ The one in Batavia was abolished in 1827 (F. de Haan, *Oud Batavia: gedenkboek uitgegeven . . . naar aanleiding van het driehonderdjarig bestaan der stad in 1919*, 2 vols [Batavia: G. Kolff & Co., 1922], Vol. 1, p. 519, paragraph 949).

³⁸ I.A. Nederburgh, *Einige hoofdlijnen van het Nederlandsch-Indië Staatsrecht* (The Hague, 1923), p. 32.

tion. According to The Siau w Giap, "In 1874 about forty *peranakans* in Sumenep whose way of life was completely Indonesian, and who had adopted Indonesian names and dress, were recognized as natives by the Dutch authorities, who had until then regarded them as Chinese".³⁹

However, the development of collective ancestral temples and funeral associations in significant numbers from the mid-nineteenth century onwards shows that some segments of the Chinese community made determined efforts to halt the Islamization process, which apparently was still very strong in the 1850s and 1860s.⁴⁰

The Hokkien Kong Tik Soe and the Chinese Revival in Surabaya

A close look at the rules drawn up for the Hokkien Kong Tik Soe reveals the level of concern of the founders at the merging of the *peranakan* with the local population.

Their founding declaration briefly surveys the unsatisfactory situation in Surabaya in 1862.⁴¹ It notes that since the establishment of a temple⁴² nothing had been undertaken to promote civilization in the city and good manners had fallen into oblivion. Surabaya could, however, in their view, regain its previous fame; indeed, the city did not lack talented people who could found an association for the revival of good customs and the eradication of bad ones, so that the Chinese should no longer be ridiculed by other nations.

An overview of the founders' purposes follows: (a) to collect subscriptions and constitute a capital fund; (b) to use the interest for the purchase of grave cloths and coffins, which would be sold at the cheapest price according to their category, while those of inferior quality might even be given free of charge to those who could not afford them; (c) to acquire three sets of funeral and wedding furnishings (e.g. chairs, altars and tables, gongs, cymbals, funeral palls, catafalques, draperies, lanterns, banners, and flags); (d) to repair and clean the buildings of the Gongde Ci and

³⁹ The Siau w Giap, "Religion and Overseas Chinese Assimilation in South East Asia", *Revue du Sud-Est Asiatique* 2 (1965), p. 73.

⁴⁰ Such cultural resistance by the Chinese community to local influences perceived as foreign was apparently also observed during the mid-nineteenth century among the Chinese of Penang (Yen Ching-hwang, "Early Chinese Clan Organizations in Singapore and Malaya, 1819-1911" in *Early Chinese Immigrant Societies: Case Studies from North America and British Southeast Asia*, ed. Lee Lai To [Singapore: Heinemann Asia, 1988], p. 217).

⁴¹ Schlegel, *Chineesche Begraffenis-en Huwelijksonderneming*, pp. 4-13.

⁴² Presumably the Mazu Gong, also called Tianshang Shengmu Miao ("Temple of the Holy Mother from Heaven"), and Fuan Gong ("Temple of Happiness and Peace"). Its founding date is not known with certainty; however, according to oral tradition, it is the oldest temple in Surabaya. The oldest inscription still to be found in the temple dates from 1832 and presumably coincides with a repair of the sanctuary. It was donated by Captain The Goan Tjing (1795-1851), whose sons, The Boen Ke and The Boen Hie, later initiated the founding of the Hokkien Kong Tik Soe.

the Mazu Gong and care for the furnishings; (e) to hire a person to be responsible for bookkeeping, attending to the temple, and organizing regular meetings of the association, and to appoint two other persons to run the association; (f) to establish a collective ancestral temple on the premises of the association and order an altar for the ancestral tablets of members.⁴³

This text, composed in Chinese by the future secretary of the association, a certain Joe (Njo) Hong Bouw (Yang Hongmao), was signed by the founding members, who included the head and former head of the Chinese community and twelve persons among whom were two members of the Tjoa family.⁴⁴ Eight of their signatures, half of them in Latin script and the other half in Chinese characters, also figure on the statutes of the Hokkien Kong Tik Soe, written in Dutch, deposited at the notary's office in 1864.⁴⁵ Among the latter was the landowner, Tan Tong Liep (d. 1907),⁴⁶ who became the president of the committee managing the ancestral temple when it was renewed in 1884.

After the association was registered by the Dutch authorities in 1864, the founders issued further rules concerning its organization, social activities, and code of conduct, with provisions for fines and expulsion when the rules were infringed. A master of ceremonies was appointed to see

⁴³ It seems that after its foundation, the collective ancestral temple was in the premises of the Mazu Gong (located in Jalan Coklat). However, in 1869 at the latest, its headquarters were moved to a Chinese-style building located in Jalan Bibis.

⁴⁴ Tjoa Djien Ho (1814–90) and his son, Tjoa Sien Hie (1836–1904), belonged to a family of long standing in Surabaya and were well educated in Chinese. Like the The and the Han, the Tjoa had invested in the sugar industry (C. Salmon, "The Han Family of East Java—Entrepreneurship and Politics [18th–19th Centuries]" *Archipel* 41 ([1991], pp. 53–87). Of interest here is the fact that their first ancestor in Surabaya, Tjoa Kwie Soe (1739–93), was married to a Javanese noble lady, Nyai Roro Kiendjeng, whose tomb still stands in the Muslim cemetery of Ampel. Tjoa Djien Ho lived in retirement in Surabaya, spending most of his time reading books in Chinese and Javanese. His son, Tjoa Sien Hie, was both a scholar and an entrepreneur; he was the owner in 1874 of a sugar mill in Tamangsari that was the biggest privately owned one of its kind in East Java (*Koloniaal Verslag* [The Hague, 1875], Appendix, RR 1–2). He served as lieutenant from 1869 to 1884 and translated into Malay a fragment of the "Code of the Qing Dynasty" relating to heritage and adoption (*Atoeran hak poesaka orang Tjina dan hal mengangkat anak, tersalin dari pada kitab Tai Tshing Loet Li* [Surabaya, 1900]).

⁴⁵ Captain The Boen Hie, Honorary Captain The Boen Ke, Tjoa Djien Sing (1824–1909, who was Tjoa Djien Ho's brother and later became captain from 1874 to 1889), and Liem Pik Sioe (who was also involved in the sugar industry) signed their names in Romanized script, while Tjia Tjien Tiong, Tan Tong Liep, Oen Tian Hie, and the secretary, Joe (Njo) Hong Bouw, signed theirs in Chinese.

⁴⁶ Tan Tong Liep (Tjoe Hong) was a fourth-generation Surabaya *peranakan*. In 1907 his two sons, Tan Boen Tjing (1852–1927) and Tan Boen Liang, established an ancestral temple with an endowment for ceremonies, maintenance of tombs, and support of poor relatives (*Javasche Courant*, 16 Aug. 1907, "Vereeniging Tan Tong Liep"). The temple was moved from Jalan Bongaran to Jalan Residen Sudirman in the late 1960s or early 1970s. It still houses the ancestral tablets of the family and a genealogy in Romanized Malay going back to the great-grandfather of Tan Tong Liep.

that each member was seated according to his rank. Members attending meetings or simply visiting the temple were required to be dressed in a decent manner, behave properly, and bring along their sons and grandsons so that they might gradually learn the rules regulating the relations between the generations and show deference to their elders.⁴⁷

A postscript to these rules written by Tjoa Djien Ho makes clear that the eradication of "Muslim" beliefs was a particular aim of the association. This reminds members that the founders' aims were to restore Confucian social order and eradicate superstitious beliefs, especially among the educated members of the association. He portrays the Chinese turn-coats as follows:

They have read Confucius and Mencius but still believe in the teachings of Laozi and Buddha: their mouths voice the correct doctrine, but their hearts are steeped in heresy. They prepare thanksgiving services in the way the natives do, and regard this as proper; they also worship the tombs of the natives and do not feel ashamed, saying that there is nothing wrong in doing so, while in fact they are astray; they also say that there is nothing to be done for their families and nothing to be taught to their people. They take refuge behind their good reputation, like to play with conventional phrases, and wallow and sink in their depraved customs, bringing themselves and others to ruin. They think of heterodox and confused doctrines and their words and deeds are in opposition to the correct rules.⁴⁸

To reinforce their condemnation of superstitions borrowed from the natives, the founders of the association added two further texts to the postscript. The first, entitled "Commentary on the Tombs of the Natives" (*Fanmu jieyue*), condemns the worship of the tombs of native "Muslim priests" (*maohanmo jiao zhi fanzeng*), posthumously regarded as "saints", by believers, who, hoping to derive some benefit, are prey to the extortion of the keepers of the tombs.⁴⁹ The authors conclude: "There is no need to discuss the stupidity of the natives. But when the Chinese (*Tangren*) also follow such practices, we cannot help deplore and regret such a stupidity".⁵⁰

The second text, the "Commentary on the Thanksgiving Services of the Natives" (*Fanjiao jieyue*), criticizes the religious meals (*selamatan*) offered to Muslim priests, who read from the Koran, chant incantations, and act as intercessors for believers desiring to obtain favours. Such actions are regarded by the authors as calamitous: "Some Chinese do the same so that one may fear that all our people will soon fall into decay and

⁴⁷ Schlegel, *Chineesche Begrafenis-en Huwelijksonderneming*, pp. 14–32.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 33–34.

⁴⁹ Such tombs are known in Chinese as *shengmu*, or "holy tomb", and in Indonesian as *kramat*, or "holy place".

⁵⁰ Schlegel, *Chineesche Begrafenis-en Huwelijksonderneming*, pp. 40–41.

completely forget the precepts of our sages. There will be no progress unless [these superstitions] are checked. We have to take the field against this evil and resist it firmly".⁵¹

These texts indicate that the Islamization process was perceived as a serious threat to the survival of Chinese identity. This perception was shared by the lower social strata, such as the founders of the Gie Khie funeral association, who included in their statutes a regulation excluding Muslim Chinese from any assistance.⁵²

✓ As early as 1866 or 1867 the Hokkien Kong Tik Soe also attempted to resinicize peranakan women in order to keep them separate from Javanese and curb the assimilation process. The first step was for Chinese women to be dressed as in China. On 1 May 1869, the trustees of the Hokkien Kong Tik Soe organized a party in the premises of the association in honour of those Chinese women who had already changed their dress. According to a note in the press, Dutch officials and their wives were also invited, and took to the dance floor.⁵³ This change in dress of the Chinese women in Surabaya was discussed extensively in the Malay press, notably *Bintang Timoor*. Some *peranakan* disapproved on the ground that no such cultural difference existed between Chinese and Javanese women, like the one who signed his article with the name of the Hokkien ✓ Kong Tik Soe written backwards (Soe Tek Kong Kien Hok), probably to better express his disapproval:

What does it matter if one is called *bibi*
Dried shrimps are also called *hebie*
A taro is different from a yam
But there is no humble one and no noble one.

He went on to mock the inability of these "Chinese women" to speak Chinese:

They change their costume to return to tradition
In Bengkulu they are called Chinese women
But if they use Javanese when they speak
They would be even more bizarre.⁵⁴

⁵¹ *ibid.*, pp. 42–43.

⁵² *Javasche Courant*, no. 25, 27 March 1877, paragraph 8.

⁵³ "Pesta di roemah Hok Kien Kong Tik Soe", *Bintang Timoor*, 5 May 1869. In Singapore the first ball given by a Chinese, the famous *peranakan* businessman Tan Kim Seng (1806–64) from Melaka, was held in 1852, and the guests were requested to wear their respective styles of dress (Song Ong Siang, *One Hundred Years' History of the Chinese in Singapore* [1923; reprint, Singapore: University of Malaya Press, 1967], pp. 47–49).

⁵⁴ *Bibi* is a form of address used for older Javanese women; *hebie* is the Hokkien term for dried shrimp. *Bintang Timoor*, 12 June 1869: "Pedoeli apa di pangil bibie/Oedang kering djoega di pangil hebie/Talas tiada sama dan oebi/Hiena moelianja poen tida lebih/.../Toekar pakean menoeroet koeno/Bengkoeloe kata prampoewan Tjino/Kaloe omongnja merené merono/Semingkin djadi tiada senono".

Another writer held that Chinese dress was not suitable for *peranakan* women pedlars and intermediaries:

Ask the women go-betweens

If they want to be dressed in Chinese style . . . ✓

How difficult it is for these business women ✓

The intermediaries who also sell printed cotton and gingham.

On the one hand, they hold a parcel under their arm, and,

On the other, they carry an umbrella . . .

Would it not become even more difficult?⁵⁵

Other writers in *Bintang Timoor* regarded this measure as a good one, like the letter of reply to Soe Tek Kong Kien Hok accompanied by a *syair* (poem), signed G.B.P. Its author held that, thanks to Chinese dress, confusion between nations (*bangsa*) could be avoided. He further argued that Chinese women were part of the Chinese nation and should be regarded as such, even if in the past their position had been inferior. He compared *peranakan* Chinese women to local Dutch women who, even if they could not speak Dutch, were nevertheless dressed as in Holland, so that "their nation should not be humiliated."⁵⁶

Judging from old photographs of the Tjoa family dated 1891 and from European reports, most of the women of the three dominant Chinese families of Surabaya (The, Tjoa and Han) had returned to their "national" costume by the end of the nineteenth century.⁵⁷ ✓

The Hokkien Kong Soe and Resinicization in Makasar

A strikingly similar struggle can be discerned unfolding among the Chinese in Makasar. As in Surabaya, Muslim *peranakan* society comprised not only the lower classes but also some members of dominant families like the Thoeng and the Nio. Their religious life focused around the Buton Mosque in Makasar, allegedly founded by a converted Chinese whose

⁵⁵ *Bintang Timoor*, 19 June 1869.

⁵⁶ *Bintang Timoor*, 16 June 1869: "Pranakan Wolanda dan njonjah 2,/Tiada samoea bisa omongnja,/Tetapi pakaian tiada berbeda,/Sebab maneroet olihnja bonda,/Djangan bangsanja hina dan renda/". A few days later another *peranakan* from Cirebon, a certain K.P.N., also penned a *syair* praising the decision of the Hokkien Kong Tik Soe and affirming that one may be Chinese even without speaking the language; he concludes his poem thus: "The stars in the sky are yet numerous,/I would say seven or nine./Our leaders have achieved their aims,/For they have established the Hokkien Kong Tik Soe" (*Bintang Timoor*, 26 June 1869).

⁵⁷ European accounts include M.T.H. Perelaer, *Het Kamerlid van Berkenstein in Nederlandsch-Indië* (Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff, 1888), Vol. 2, part 1, p. 161; Justus van Maurik, *Indrukken van een Totok, indische typen & schetsen* (Amsterdam: Van Hokema & Warendorf, 1897), pp. 346–47. According to an article that appeared in the weekly, *Sin Po*, the campaign to resinicize *peranakan* Chinese women also included attempts to stop the chewing of betel ("Perkoempoelan Tionghoa jang paling kaja dan toea di Soerabaja", 9 Jan. 1939, p. 21). ✓

tomb still stood near the mosque until it was destroyed in the 1950s.⁵⁸ These Muslim *peranakan*, like their counterparts in East Java,⁵⁹ took Muslim-sounding names and intermarried with the local elite. They also worshipped holy tombs, practised *selamatan*, and shared all the other native "superstitions" (*takhayul*). Although no concrete evidence has come to light on the origins of the reactions against Islamization within Chinese society, one may assume that the process was similar to that which occurred in Surabaya and may even have been influenced by it. The memory of this resinicization movement was still alive in the 1930s, to judge from three anonymous articles that appeared in the Malay daily *Pembrita Makasar* alluding to the barring of Muslim converts from access to the Chinese cemetery by Captain Nio Tek Hoe (in office 1864–79) in reaction to the conversion of older *peranakan* women.⁶⁰ Exactly how this measure was implemented is not known, but, judging from records of the Nio family, all the Muslim family members were buried in a Muslim cemetery.⁶¹ According to the *Pembrita Makasar*, this prohibition had the effect of discouraging the Chinese from undergoing open conversion; however, women continued to support the mosque financially, send presents during Ramadan, practise *selamatan*, worship at holy graves (*kramat*), and abstain from pork. According to the same source, Lie Lean Hie, the grandson of the founder of the Hokkien Kong Soe, was another strong supporter of resinicization. He also encouraged women to give up the *baju kurung* and return to Chinese dress, and the womenfolk of his own family followed this advice.⁶² Some women were highly involved in this reformist activity; as seen above, two of them contributed to the repair of the ancestral temple. The resinicization of *peranakan* girls may have been accelerated by the apparent opening, as early as 1901, of a school run by a Chinese teacher.⁶³

⁵⁸ Information provided by Mouhd Mas Oud Qasim (interview with author, Ujung Pandang, 1986), who also supplied a list of the nine *peranakan* imam in charge of the Mesjid Buton compiled by his father, Ence Moh. Kasim (1872–1949). It starts with Ince Taha (in office 1814–37) and ends with Mohamad Jafar (in office 1924–45).

⁵⁹ C. Salmon, "The Han Family", pp. 64–74.

⁶⁰ "Hokkien Kongsoe", *Pembrita Makasar*, 15 Aug. 1932; "Hikajat pendirian Mesjid Kampong Boeton", *Pembrita Makasar*, 2 Dec. and 17 Dec. 1932.

⁶¹ According to the typed report of a meeting held in 1958 in the temple of the Nio family (Notulen sapat anggauta tgl 26–5–1958 mengenai pemindahan kubur 2), Nio Phanlong (1731–1784) had been buried in the new Muslim cemetery (Tama Kuburan Islam "Baru") along with other Muslim members of the family. However, some other Muslim family members, mainly women, had been buried in the old Muslim cemetery (Taman Kuburan Islam "Tua").

⁶² The *baju kurung* is a long shirt worn by Indonesian women, especially in the Outer Islands. *Pembrita Makasar*, 15 Aug. 1932.

⁶³ Chen Mong Hock, *The Early Chinese Newspapers of Singapore 1881–1912* (Singapore: University of Malaya Press, 1967), p. 125.

Resinicization as a result of colonial policy?

Although we do not know much about the proselytizing activities of the founders of these collective temples in the last decades of the nineteenth century, it seems that they had prepared their community for a further step in the resinicization process. At least this is how the *peranakan* themselves viewed the problem.

In 1924, the journalist and political figure, Kwee Hing Tjiat,⁶⁴ in his Malay-language account of the Chinese Movement in Java before 1920, saw the foundation of the Hokkien Kong Tik Soe as the first sign of the awareness of Chineseness and the precursor of the Temple to Confucius, established in 1906:

At a certain point in the middle of the previous century, the Chinese of Java felt that they were beginning to be part of a foreign community [aliran penghidoepan asing]. Because of that, the time was ripe for the establishment of the Hokkien Kong Tik Soe in Surabaya, one of the most enduring Chinese associations, out of which the well-known Kongzi Miao (Temple to Confucius) in the Kapasan district was later founded . . . An old Chinese of Surabaya, who followed the movement of the Hokkien Kong Tik Soe from the very beginning, and who has since passed away, told me when I asked him some ten years ago, that the aim of the association was to make the Chinese live according to Chinese customs, because there was a danger they would be absorbed in other communities and disappear.⁶⁵

At this point a question has to be raised. Why should this awareness have appeared in Surabaya and in Makasar precisely in the mid-nineteenth century? It is clear that the various processes of integration of the Chinese and of their descendants were closely connected with the changing policies of the colonial rulers. We have shown elsewhere that the attempts of the Han family to develop the Eastern salient, in conjunction with the local elite with whom they tried to identify themselves, were already being overtaken by events.⁶⁶ The Dutch were afraid of seeing these Asian competitors develop a state within the state and the radical measures they took in 1813 and 1818 definitely put an end to this extraordinary partnership between Muslim administrators and *peranakan* entrepreneurs. In 1854 the Colonial Government implemented a new policy to separate the "foreign orientals" from the rest of the population by giving them a different civil status.⁶⁷ Although it had been intended to benefit the Dutch mer-

⁶⁴ Kwee was born in Surabaya in 1891 and died in Semarang in 1939. See Leo Suryadinata, *Mencari Identitas Nasional, dari Tjoe Bou San sampai Yap Thiam Hien* (Jakarta: Lembaga Penelitian, Pendidikan dan Penerangan Ekonomi dan Sosial, 1990), pp. 23–47.

⁶⁵ Kwee Hing Tjiat, *Doea Kepala Batoe* (Berlin: Maurer & Dimmick, 1924), p. 14.

⁶⁶ Salmon, "The Han Family", pp. 68–74.

⁶⁷ Denys Lombard, *Le carrefour javanais: Essai d'histoire globale*, Vol. 2 (Paris: Editions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1990), pp. 74–75.

chants who were dealing with these foreign oriental communities, the *peranakan* were quick to realize that it could also be a great benefit to them. Their elite felt the need to think of the local Chinese as a separate "nation" (*bangsa*), a term used by those who wanted to revive a distinct Chinese identity.

Apart from Tjoa Djien Ho and his son Tjoa Sien Hie, it is difficult to discern to what extent the *peranakan* who initiated the movement were versed in Chinese culture. One wonders whether those founding members who signed their names in Latin script were literate enough in Chinese to read the rules of the Hokkien Kong Tik Soe. And one can only speculate as to whether Joe Hong Bouw, the secretary of the association, was a *peranakan* or a merchant literatus who had come from Fujian province. As these first attempts at resinicization did not directly concern the newcomers, it is difficult to ascertain whether they supported them or not. But their role was obvious, at least in Surabaya, in the further movements aimed at promoting Chinese education, reviving Confucianism, and founding a Temple to Confucius and a Chinese Chamber of Commerce. However, in the 1910s the cultural and political gap between the *peranakan* and the newcomers had become so great that the two groups finally parted company again.

To conclude, if we take a look at the successive waves of resinicization in the long run, they appear to have followed more or less the progress of colonial control. From the founding of Dutch Batavia in 1619 to the fall of Banten in 1682, the VOC was in rivalry with the Banten sultanate for control of Chinese traders; if "peranakanization" took place in Banten with the conversion of many Chinese to Islam, the reverse occurred in Batavia, where a distinct Chinese community was under the authority of its own captain. The gradual extension of Dutch control eastwards saw the emergence of Chinese temples in Cirebon, Semarang, and Makasar during the eighteenth century, whereas in Surabaya the earliest evidence of a Chinese temple is only from 1832.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ I would like to express my gratitude to Mrs Ming Govaars-Tjia, who provided research assistance in the KITLV library in Leiden.

Chinese Characters:

Bacheng yici	吧城義祠	Li Yuzhu	李玉珠
Be BiauW Tjoan	馬森泉	Lie Lean Hie	李連喜
Be Ing Tjioe	馬贏洲	Lim	林
Changtai Miao	長泰廟	Lin Moniang	林默娘
Chaojuesi	潮覺寺	Lioe/lauw	劉
Chen Ching-Ho	陳荊和	Liyi Tang	禮義堂
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Guangdong gongci	廣東公祠	Tan Kim Seng	陳金聲
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Cover design: Carol Colbath

University of Hawai'i Press
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822-1888

www.uhpress.hawaii.edu

ISBN 0-8248-2446-6



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